

LECTURER

**During and after the
COVID-19 pandemic**

June 2021

TIPS AND
RESOURCES HOW
TO ADAPT TO
TEACHING ONLINE
AND OFFLINE BY
LECTURERS FOR
LECTURERS

By Gergana Bogdanova and
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letter from the editors

March 2020, the month that changed our lives forever. Not just mine, but yours as well. Nobody could have ever predicted what happened in the last year. The impact of COVID-19 far outreached what initially thought possible. One of the groups that were impacted the most during this time was lecturers. In a matter of days, they were forced to abandon classrooms and begin teaching online for the first time. We wrote this magazine to reach lecturers who have battled the war of lecturing online and engaging students through the internet. Although we enjoy interacting with one another through the internet, there is nothing more enjoyable than finding like-minded people. We hope you enjoy the magazine and it inspires you to continue exploring different teaching methods and learning from one another.

Additionally, we would like to thank everyone who took the time out of their busy schedules to talk to us, share their perspective and opinion. Without you, this would have never been possible.



Gergana & Gabriela

FINAL YEAR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS STUDENTS

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A woman with blonde hair and glasses, wearing a dark blazer over a light-colored top, stands in a modern classroom. She is smiling and gesturing with her right arm towards a round table. The classroom features wooden desks and benches arranged in rows. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the woman and the text.

*Think of
yourself less
as a teacher
but more as a
designer of
meaningful
experiences*

-NORMAN ENG

EXchange Perspectives for Local Impact in COvid times



This magazine has been developed as part of the EXchange Perspectives for Local Impact in COvid times module of the International Business Program at the Hague University of Applied Sciences.

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WELCOME

TO THIS
COLLECTION OF
LESSONS AND
BEST PRACTICES
ACROSS
EDUCATIONAL
PROFESSIONALS
LOCATED IN THE
NETHERLANDS
AND BULGARIA.

Through this magazine, we invite you to learn about the experiences of your colleagues. Our research through semi-structured one-on-one online interviews highlighted many opportunities and challenges that remain to be addressed in the educational sector.

Being a lecturer has always been a great challenge. However, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world, not many educational institutions were prepared to offer digital education.

"IT WAS ALL ABOUT CRISIS MANAGEMENT!"

There was no time to research or learn how lecturers can give an interactive lecture or learn how to motivate a class best. There were almost no experts in this field of online education, and time was of the essence.

The truth that the pandemic has shown us is that online lecturing can be an isolating task. It almost feels as if the teachers were not given a chance to express their opinion and nobody was there to listen.

This gives the magazine a purpose - to learn from one another and help each other in the time of need.



INTERVIEW INSIGHTS

There were many similarities and differences across the countries. Although both Bulgaria and the Netherlands are located in the European Union, the educational systems and facilities differ slightly.

Within the Netherlands, the situation concerning the closing and reopening of the educational institutions remained reasonably stable. The Dutch Government continued to broadcast live conferences where the Premier, Mr. Mark Rutte, and the minister of Health, Hugo de Jong, continued to give updates to the population on the situation around the pandemic. Meanwhile, in Bulgaria, the situation was rapidly changing. There was no formal decision-making or concrete planning, and decisions related to closures were sometimes taken week by week.

We interviewed several lecturers that varied highly in their professions. Some are primary school teachers, and others are professors of medicine and dentistry. We also interviewed university lecturers, researchers, and support staff. All perspectives have been gathered, and here with you, we share the three lessons learned.



**QUOTES BY THE
DUTCH COLLEAGUES**

**THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
TAUGHT US LESSONS
THAT WE WERE MEANT
TO LEARN IN THE COMING
10 YEARS, WITHIN ONE
MONTH.**

- Lecturer of Finance

**TO PREPARE THE
CLASSES AND PRE-
RECORDED LECTURES, IT
WAS NOT AN EASY RIDE.
WORK-LIFE BALANCE DID
NOT EXIST.**

- Researcher

Lesson 1



ADAPTING TO NEW ENVIRONMENTS "THE NEW NORMAL"

Many of us did not expect that education will take a digital form so soon. With the closure of borders worldwide and travel bans, educational institutions also moved to online education. For most of us, this method of working and learning is currently known as "the new normal."

It was a difficult journey for most of the lecturers in Bulgaria and the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, the educational methods had to change from physical to virtual in a week or two, whereas in Bulgaria, in two or three days. All interviewees shared that most of the courses that moved from physical education to virtual were not adapted accordingly in terms of course design and teaching methodology. Some shared that this was one of the biggest challenges they faced, as there was little to no time to prepare the learning materials. Neither was there time nor resources for the lecturers to educate themselves on how to provide online lessons.

Technological difficulties were present from all sides. For example, a primary teacher in Bulgaria, who has more than 35 years of teaching experience, shared that with young pupils, between the age of 7 and 10 years, it was challenging to give them lessons, as due to their young age, they were not able to work with the online platform the school used by themselves.

For other lecturers, it was also the other way around. There were no clear guidelines provided on which platform to use and how to use it. All of the interviewed educational professionals in Bulgaria shared that they taught themselves alone by using YouTube videos and asking other colleagues technical questions. In the Netherlands, the situation was a bit different. There were small resources and courses already available for lecturers to attend. However, there was no time. All of these highly skilled professionals found themselves in an entirely new situation during which they had to improvise, learn new skills and become digital savvy in a blink of an eye. Even later in the year In Bulgaria, there was no formal training provided for the staff. In higher educational institutions in the Netherlands, there were resources. However, lecturers believe that they were available too late.



**"PLEASE UNMUTE
YOURSELF."**



There were different examples of technical difficulties that lecturers faced in the last 18 months. Therefore, we hereby share some enablers for a successful online education.

Accessibility

First and most importantly, to teach online, both lecturers and the students had to have the required technological devices. Some would expect that because Bulgaria is a country that has fewer resources and is well known for the big gap between rich and poor, this would not have been possible. However, it was great to learn that majority of the students had accessible devices and were able to follow the classes. Furthermore, where problems arose, the educational institutions could step in and lend devices to students. For example, in the Netherlands, some universities, such as The Hague University of Applied sciences, offered students interest-free loans, which helped many students in financial need cover their expenses or obtain the needed devices to follow the classes.

Open-mindedness

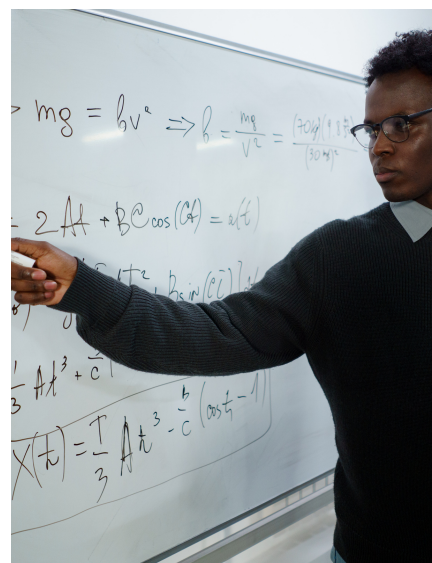
Although most lecturers and students were able to access the required devices, the speed of adaptation was also vital to keep in mind. There are different types of lecturers and while some are very digitally oriented, others had difficulties learning how to work with the required technology. In most institutions Microsoft Teams was the program used. In Bulgaria, the Zoom Meetings platform was also very commonly used.

We have seen time and time again, with the introduction of new technology that the adaptation is slow. Why? Because people try to stick in their lane. With a changing environment, the key is to not be afraid of the unknown. Explore more, and if you keep an open mind, the process will be much easier.

Examinations

Honestly speaking, similarly to the situation with the design of the classes and lectures, the pre-determined exam types were also a challenge when adapting to the virtual world of teaching. It was a very time and energy consuming process for many lecturers. This is due to the fact that all tests had to be adapted in order for them to take a virtual shape. Many exams were postponed to the upcoming examination period or their format was changed. However taking this decision was a very lengthy process due to the many regulations in place.

Well, it took numerous frustrations from the lecturers side and the students side, but eventually things fell into place and now everything is running at a better pace and smoother.



Lesson 2

CAPTURING THE STUDENTS ATTENTION IN A VIRTUAL CLASSROOM.

"I feel like students were not willing to participate rather than not being able to."

One of the biggest challenges of lecturing online seemed to be the attention/motivation of the students or lack thereof. With a shift to doing everything online, the students seem to lack motivation in online learning. Some wonder how this is possible, with the favorite object of any student and pupil being their phone and laptop.

When the switch from classroom to online teaching occurred, many were not prepared for the challenges that were about to hit like a brick. While many issues, such as adapting to technology and adapting the curriculum, a surprising challenge appeared - lack of motivation. Some lecturers were quite shocked to see the disinterest and lack of engagement during classes. The issue occurred, and it seemed as every week passed, fewer and fewer people were showing up to class in Bulgaria and the Netherlands. If there were mandatory attendance, some students would come up with the wildest excuses to not turn on the camera.

There was a clear consensus; none of the lecturers enjoyed this. It seemed as if there was nothing they would do to bring up the students' spirits and have them engage with others in the online space. Additionally, as the new year came around, some lecturers had to teach a new class for the first time, and there was an evident lack of connection.

Pre-covid, one of the most enjoyable parts was the connections that were made between lecturers and students. So many shared the love for a subject or had casual day-to-day conversations that didn't feel the same post-covid.



"Students were used to the campus, going to class and asking questions, and trying to learn something. Now, they hide behind their screen, are not moving, and work becomes "I will do it later." But eventually, it will pile up, and the workload creates too much pressure. Thus, they are no longer willing to learn and are in class just because."

If online learning stands a chance in a world post-covid, the lecturers must find a way to grab their students' attention and keep it. Perhaps, the core problem lies with the method of teaching. What used to work in the classroom won't always work online and vice versa.

Assigning specific roles within teamwork and during workshops

Motivation of the class has been a key problem area for many of the lecturers with no previous experience in teaching online. Some shared that when students are previously instructed about their roles in the upcoming workshop and during group work, there was more engagement within the class.

"THEY SIMPLY BECOME MORE CLEAR ON THEIR DELIVERABLES AND CONTRIBUTION."

More workshops and recorded lectures

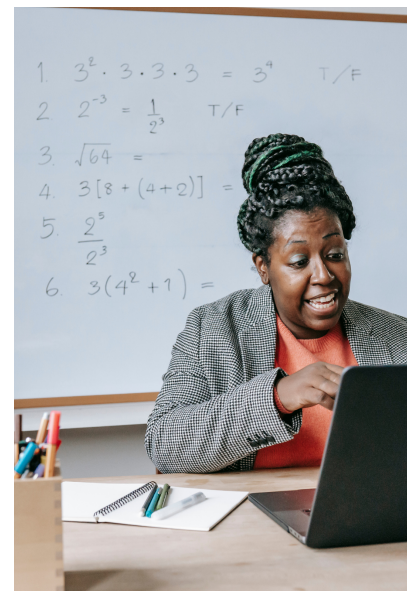
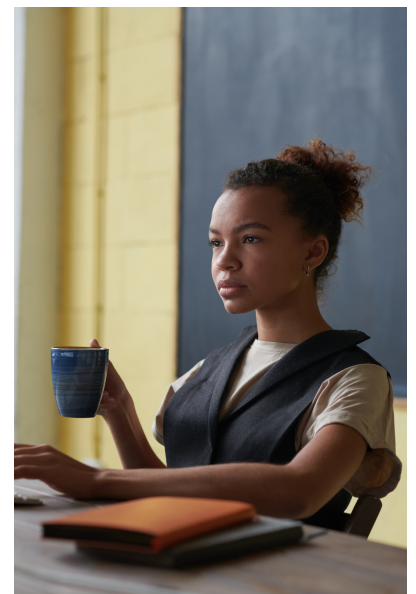
Lecturers share that in an online environment, workshops operate best when seeking interaction with the class and when looking to motivate students to pay attention to the material. It looks like when recorded lectures are made available to the class, students can watch them at a time convenient for them, which resolves the issue of teaching students located at different time-zones across the world.

Design weekly mini-exams for the students

in an offline environment, students would learn in class and use this knowledge in the final exam. Online, this seems to be inefficient. What worked for some, were weekly quizzes or mini exams. If students did not pay attention in an online lecture, a weekly exam will push them to take learning more seriously. This method has proven to be successful in the past and some lecturers used incentives such as boosted grade or a percentage of the assessment coming from these weekly exams.

Engage in conversation to avoid distractions

During the interviews, conversation was revealed to be a lecturers go-to technique on engaging an online classroom. Lecturers mentioned that if you start a debate or conversation about a passionate topic, students willingly jump in and are ready to share and defend their opinions. Some classes that were purely based on a debate were found to be some of the most engaging.



QUOTES BY THE BULGARIAN
COLLEAGUES

**IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT
TO MOTIVATE THE
STUDENTS TO BE ACTIVE
AND RESPONSIBLE**

- Primary school teacher

**I KEEP PUSHING MYSELF
TO BE MOTIVATED AND
FIND NEW WAYS OF
TEACHING AND
LECTURING RESOURCES**

- English lecturer

Lesson 3



When speaking to lecturers, it was evident that everyone knew the distinctions between online and offline learning. However, in a post-COVID-19 world, due to the vast divide between lecturers' opinions, it is unclear how different lecturers will continue online or offline?

**SHOULD WE CONTINUE
TEACHING ONLINE OR RETURN
TO THE CLASSROOM?**

Today, it seems like there is a significant divide between lecturers. Due to the pandemic, many were forced to switch to online teaching for the first time. However, some lecturers had already practiced online or were aware of this type of education. Now that the restrictions are loosening, it is evident that some want to return to the classroom as soon as possible, but some have other ideas. Online lecturing has proven itself to be the king of efficiency, and many teachers enjoy the benefits of no travel necessities and the quick response time. It is pretty tricky to determine which option would be the best or even implemented in the current curriculum. However, as online learning poses its advantages and disadvantages, if anything were to change, it is clear that time needs to be spent creating an interactive space to receive the full benefits of such a teaching style.

The Benefits

Offline - Teachers can build strong bonds with their pupils that encourage one another and build classroom engagement.

Online education is prime for creating efficiency and promoting a more self-taught environment where the lecturer can build a involved workshop. It was mentioned that one self-taught class has a 97% pass rate.

The Drawbacks

Offline - In a highly international environment, some find it difficult to come from far distances. Additionally, lecturers often live far away and traveling every day for sometimes hours is quite inefficient

Online learning poses a huge drawback, the lack of control. Lecturers can never be sure whether the student is actually learning and gaining sufficient knowledge about the subject when they don't talk during the class.

"BE SPECIFIC IN THE KIND OF SOLUTION YOU ARE SEEKING THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO YOU AND HOW YOU WORK. FOCUSING ONLY ON WHAT DOES NOT WORK ENDS UP ONLY DESCRIBING THE PROBLEM AND ENDS AT THAT."

Communication and networking can open many doors

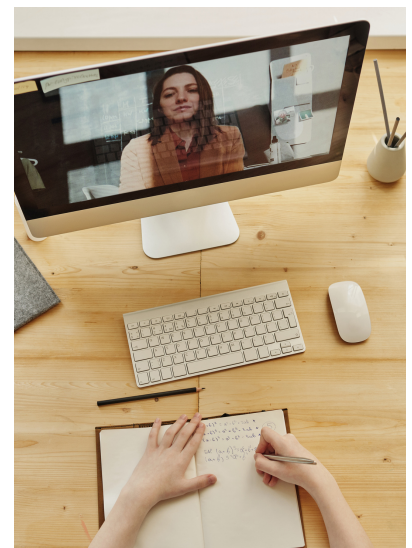
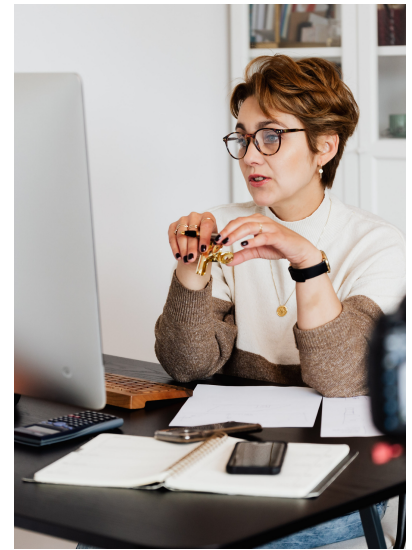
We are all people at the end of the day, and it is in our nature to seek support and advice from others around us. Speaking to many lecturers in Bulgaria and the Netherlands showed us the importance of communication within the sector. We identify lessons learned and solutions found that are overlapping and relevant for both regions. Still, when asked about whom they reached out for support, the majority said they learned by themselves. Therefore, it is essential for lecturers to network within their close circle and network and meet and discuss their questions, concerns and share best practices with others abroad. Why invent the wheel when it's already been invented? Let's use the benefits of globalization and free access to information and learn from each other.

Working more efficient

Online education has proven to many lecturers that they can invest time in creating online educational materials and that their invested time will be returned in the future, as once materials are provided, they can update them where relevant and use more their time to innovate their current content, participate in research or engage more in other educational activities.

Work-life balance and mental health

While online education has provided many lecturers with more time to spend with their families, it has also resulted in a problem. The difficulty of separating work from private and the boundary between the two became thinner. This resulted in higher work pressure, the lecturers share, and the feeling of being burnt out.





TIPS & TRICKS

BLENDED LEARNING

Perhaps, there is no going back after the pandemic, and there is only going forward. But, to go forward, we need to keep in mind that there is no black and white. The last 18 months taught us a valuable lesson that we need to be adaptable. We are the first to be hit with such a challenging task, and there is always the uncertainty that something that presents a similar urgency will occur again. This is why a teaching style called blended learning has been proposed.

Blended learning is a style of education in which students learn via electronic and online media and traditional face-to-face teaching. Blended learning is an option that considers both perspectives, teachers who want online and teachers who love offline.

Many lecturers thought that blended learning would satisfy both the teachers and the students. One way how to work with this teaching method would be to record the lectures and have workshops in person. The recorded lectures would be theory-heavy and be there for students at any point in time. The workshops would be organized in an engaging environment that promotes discussions and teamwork.

Here you can access resources for blended learning:
Click here for the link to - [blended learning and the future of education: Monique Markoff at TEDxIthacaCollege](#)
Click here for the link to - [Blended learning at the University of Bristol in 2021](#)
Click here for the link to - [Virtual Events & Training, Virtual Summit July 28 - July 29](#)



RESOURCES



Webinars

Nowadays, there are many resources that lecturers can use. We hereby recommend the webinars from Pearson related to **Distance learning**. Previous recordings can be accessed by clicking on this [link](#).

Networking

The European Union has supported several organizations with the creation of platforms where teachers can find schools to team up and collaborate in various projects with. Also, lecturers can find other teachers with whom they can share their experiences. There are also many online and offline seminars and much more information provided by European networks.

eTwinning

eTwinning is the most prominent teachers' network in Europe. It provides a platform to enable teaching staff to create collaborative projects with one or more schools from different countries. It also offers webinars, competitions, and learning events. There are a number of tools for professional development, and members can win recognition for their best projects through quality labels and eTwinning awards. Access via this [link](#).

School Education Gateway

The School Education Gateway is a platform for teachers, headteachers, policy-makers, experts, and other professionals in the school education field. As well as the latest news and resources, its Teacher Academy offers professional development opportunities for teachers through online and on-site courses. Access via this [link](#).

How to videos

[What are the best teaching apps for your classroom?](#)

[5 Effective Ways to Engage Students](#)

[The Era of Online Learning.\(TEDx Talk\)](#)

[3 engaging ways to start your online class](#)

Further Readings

You can read more on the topic on the International Taskforce on Teachers for Education 2030 website by accessing their [Knowledge Hub](#).





FINAL WORD

WHAT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND, NOT JUST AS A TEACHER BUT IN LIFE, IS THAT WHEN YOU TRY SOMETHING NEW, IT MIGHT NOT WORK THE FIRST TIME. THIS IS WHY YOU TRY AGAIN AND AGAIN. YOU WILL EVENTUALLY SUCCEED. BUT DON'T DO THE SAME THING EACH TIME. ANALYZE WHAT WENT WRONG AND WHY. THEN YOU CHANGE AND ADAPT. THAT IS THE PATHWAY TO SUCCESS.

THANK YOU FOR READING