Questions and answers

From the e+i Webinar "Home-based VET in Albania", April 17th

With answers from the "Skills for Jobs" project manager and deputy manager (S4J, Swisscontact), and the Swiss Educational Innovation Network (SNBI).

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Content

1   General Experience

Could you please **share your experience** about online training model on the spread of Covid-19 especially with developing countries?

S4J: Challenges observed during teachers ped. Support
- Distant learning during COVID-19 crisis in Albania is mostly happening through WhatsApp. This modality was proposed by line ministries, even though it is very limited in terms of interaction, sharing quality materials designed for e-learning, documentation etc. Nevertheless, this is the "fast and simple" solution most of the teachers in pre-university education are following (since they and students are familiar with w-app) and it is quite a challenge to change.
- Teachers more interested in giving their input (share materials) and assessment not into the process of learning and outcomes achieved.
- Flexibility of teaching and learning in terms of timeframe is quite difficult to grasp - teachers expect solutions that support learning during schedule as when is school. Flipped classroom concept and how tech can support not only synchronous but also asynchronous teaching and learning is still difficult to grasp.
- Generally, more interested in exploring new tool (tech side) than effects of it.

S4J: Positive findings during teachers ped. Support
- Requests to learn more on interactive content development:
  - Interest in H5P - a (module) functionality which allows interactive content development
  - Interest in producing video (video pedagogy)
- Willing to share experiences and learn from others. High presence in webinars.
- Willing to blend different tools (especially with zoom).
- Willingness to continue using the platform and online learning past the closing of schools.
- Somehow more connected (caring) with students – which makes teaching and learning more effective.

Experience from SDC funded ProJoven Program in Honduras. Started Virtualization of TVET four weeks ago, with 3 training centers, 31 trained instructors (it has been more difficult the transition with them) and 189 trainees have already started the virtual training process. We managed to negotiate with mobile phone companies to increase GB of internet for trainees registered. We have linked materials from virtual course platforms from other countries (Mexico). The experience has been challenging but inspiring so far. A good IT support team has been key for a quick start. We are using google classroom. The whole process is in development, adapting it while working, In Latin America we have started an internal community of practice for TVET virtualization with different platforms.

2   Implementing Curriculum online, general questions

Søren Bo Poulsen How will apprenticeship be affected by COVID-19?

SNBI: Generally, we expect that COVID-19 will enhance the level of digital learning and drive digitisation in apprenticeships and VET. However, this depends on the extent to which COVID-19 affects local conditions such as national restrictions/ lock-down or access to schools and workplace), and conditions that enable or restrict digital learning and teaching, such as infrastructure at schools and at home, media literacy of everyone involved, pedagogical skills of trainers and coaches, existence of e-content, organizational structure, culture and knowledge etc. – We will share evidence and experiences on effects in our Community of Practice Meeting on 7th/8th May.

DGTVET: How do we organize **TVET-related curriculum**? Teang Sak: How long does it take for online curriculum designing? Have you got some sample sharing?

SNBI: Depending on the aspects mentioned in the previous question, a taskforce has to decide, which parts of the existing curriculum can and will be further adapted and implemented. The duration of the reorganization and delivery of curriculum-aligned activities will depend on existing capacities in these areas and on the extent of the changes. The S4J-programme could build on several years of preparation of ICT delivery, building and consolidating infrastructure and training several target groups; other projects will have to start from scratch, work with very basic technologies which can only support a small part of the curriculum. However, also they can plan and implement micro-adaptations within a relatively short time, such as supporting student-teacher interaction during a lockdown. However, an issue with short-term planning is inclusion, i.e. to make sure that also underprivileged and disadvantaged groups of learners can benefit from the implementation.

- Reaksmey Thy: what is the **certificate level**, and how to **accreditation**? how is about on the job training -E training going successfully?

  Certificate level can be obtained upon course completion in the platform
  - Mesovet.al is a tool supporting to the teaching and learning process. Rather than self-paced/ independent learning as many e-courses are, this platform was designed to support blended learning where the teacher is the one referring it to the students. The certificate is issued by the VET institution (not the platform) as per the program students are enrolled.
  - Nevertheless, as per new legislation on provider administration in Albania, e-learning is recognized as a modality of offer, which means more opportunities for our providers.
- Ergueta Tejerina Maria Amparo Have you coordinated with the authorities to make the courses **valid in the education system**?
  S4J: Courses are based on subjects and learning outcomes as per frame curricula approved by national authorities. Mesovet.al platform is designed as a modality of curricula/program delivery and the learning plan developed as well as materials are aligned with the national qualification standards.
- In the current situation, **access** to VET (now distant learning) / **inclusion** of marginalised youth is even more challenging than usually. How do you tackle this?

  S4J: Inclusion/exclusion
  - Distant learning has deepened the exclusion.
  - As per providers admin data, around 10% of total students' population don't have access to distant learning due to lack of access to internet and/or a mobile device.
  - Besides CSR agreements for access to internet, we are including in our action research students with no access to distant learning in order to propose initiatives for access to education due to their circumstances.

3 Learning/teaching Design

3.1 Practical skills training

- How to provide the online training for technical **practical**? Tagauri Beka EDA TAGBE: How can students **practice skills**, which need special equipment, e. g. carpentry, or cheese making? Butscher Stefan EDA BHS Again can we get some ideas how to link online learning with **practical experience** and application as Onana says dVET students 70% of time they are in the company? Phallin: What would you recommend to online teaching and learning in Cambodia as many TVET students still have limited ability especially in **practice**?

  S4J: Experience with practical training – support from the platform:
  - As a project, we are promoting WBL at business premises. We foresee piloting of business mentors' inclusion in the platform, in support of assessment mainly.
  - Currently, online learning via mesovet.al is mainly focused in theoretical classes.
  - mesovet.al is supporting distance practical training, via:
    - posting standard procedures and processes as instructions (mainly through videos and as per learning outcomes. In several cases these video materials are produced from students as documentation of their apprenticeship.
    - for practical training in desk-based occupations (e.g. economy and IT), besides new practices explained, assignments are posted and reviewed in the platform

  SNBI: There are many examples from projects that have supported learning in practicals with mobile devices. Apprentices can be prepared online before the training and can be supported during and after practicals in several ways, such as repetition of theory, clarifying questions and problems, or reflecting experience (reflective practice). These activities can help particularly in the reconciliation of "theory" and practice resp. learning in the school and in the workplace. We will address some examples in our Community of Practice Meeting on 7th/8th May and can help you identify feasible solutions in your situation in our individual coaching (s. table in the e+i overview on technology enhanced learning).

3.2 Individualized learning

- Bhandari Usha EDA BHAUS: Do you also use **Individualized learning** module?

  Possibility for Individualized learning modules
  - This is an LMS the teacher observes individual progress and works individually with students in need for more support. Teachers are the designers of the course, meaning they can eventually develop individualized learning plans.

3.3 Examination, assessment and monitoring

- Radu Moldovanu: How the **theoretical and practical exams** will be conducted?

  S4J: Competency based exams
  - Currently mesovet.al is supporting formative/continuous assessment.
  - As prep work for Matura exams, are posted sample final tests (theoretical) as per previous examination.
  - Standardized online tests are not yet recognized by the ministries. This is a major open issue in national level and different options are being considered.

- How the **Assessment** and **Monitoring** approaches of elearning is flexible to accomodate new learners and tutors in developing countries like Tanzania?

  S4J: mesovet.al has numerous options to design continuous assessment through different types of quizzes and assignments. The teacher can trace the students' performance or use the tests to diagnose areas of improvement. Class or individual reports can be retrieved as per teacher's and students' interest. Additional reporting modules can be added to the platform as per needs.

  SNBI: With respect to monitoring, many e-learning solutions (also offline-e-learning solutions in low-resource contexts) provide advanced monitoring functions that can track the progress of individual learners, classes and even schools and provide feedback to teachers and education managers. However, also these necessitate basic IT-infrastructure. With regard to assessment, there are many open issues in high- and low-income countries likewise (see also the response above). There are sophisticated standardized online assessment tools available, some of them also support simple phones. However, to implement a solution that is aligned with your curriculum might be expensive and/or time intensive and needs time to be acknowledged by the respective local and national authorities. There is much more to be discussed on this.

4 Technical Environment

4.1 General questions

Glatz Markus EDA GLM: how to deal with VET in COVID crisis in fragile countries with poor IT **infrastructure**. WHat do you recommend?

Access to infrastructure
- It is a challenge as in other countries
- We observe that the platform is assessed via mobile phones. We don't foresee any support in upgrading hardware, but are working with mobile company CSR programs to guarantee free access to the platform and its linked YouTube channel
- For a lower bandwidth, the video materials are not posted first in the platform but in a dedicated YouTube channel linked to the platform. Lowering the video quality is being considered as well

- Sells-Rohrbach Manuela: Do you have any gender information about the users (teachers and students) of this platform? Can a statement be made about whether the percentage of female users (teachers and students) of the platform is higher than in "analogous" forms of learning?

  Females participation
  - Gender representation of students registered in the platform, corresponds to the enrollment (since if a class is being delivered online, all the students of that certain class are enrolled), but we observe girls are more active in the platform, they access more materials and stay longer.
  - Content is engendered and in the platform there is a teachers course on gender emancipation in education.

4.2 Plattform

- Teang Sak: which's suitable platform for developing countries?
  SNBI: There is not one platform that can be recommended. The choice of the platform (or other online technologies) will depend on the assessment of the areas mentioned under chapter 2. For some examples, you may want to consider the following list https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/solutions, especially the sections "systems built for use on basic mobile phones" and "Systems with strong offline functionality".

- Abidjanova Dildora EDA ABI: Who is the owner of the platform? Who designed learning?

- o Mesovet.al is based on Moodle which is license free. Currently S4J is covering the hosting and maintenance. Our internal roadmap is for this platform to be handed to national agencies, as we did with previews IT systems we developed.
- Bhandari Usha EDA BHAUS: ILM that can be used in mobile?
  S4J: Mesovet.al can be used with mobile phones.
- Maria-Anna Fernández: I am right assuming that the platform is above all used on the side of VET schools? Or do trainers from companies somehow use it?
  S4J: The platform currently is being used by VET teachers and students but in our plan is included the integration of business mentors to monitor work based learning.
- Pius Frick: we had not good experience with moodle - teachers lost considerable work because the moodle platform ran out and the public education system was not able to keep it going - therefore we have decided to work with **google classroom**. This has its downside, but at least teachers know they won't lose their work …
  SNBI: Whenever you create content, quizzes, assignments etc. on a platform, you risk losing it, when the system becomes obsolete or when media-formats change. Another big issue that requires different strategies, depending on your needs and technical environment.

- Sopheana Bronh: Does this online platform replace the former approach using Zoom, google classroom etc?
  S4J: mesovet.al is a more comprehensive system supporting online learning and allows designing of the course and materials in an interactive way, including elements of gamification which are very limited in google classroom. Moodle where mesovet.al is based, is not designed as a videoconference platform, but the function is available as a plugin.
- Sven: Dominkovic: live-classes possible as like in zoom? with direct interaction? for example also directly practical online-classes in companies? Any experiences?

  Mesovet.al vs Zoom and google classroom
  - o We observe teachers use Zoom as complementary, during their synchronous teaching. It is often used in combination with the platform when interactive materials are accessed via shared screen to support explanation of new concepts, or discussion
  - o Google classroom is an alternative LMS, but rather basic. Mesovet.al is based on Moodle, an all-in-one learning management system which with a lot more functionalities to develop lesson plan, allow collaboration and content interactivity options, multiple formats of assessment etc.

4.3 Devices

- Humayun Md. Kabir: If the learning is supported by equipment, require movement of the student at least a small distance how it is working if social distancing matter and lockdown is in place?
  S4J: In a normal situation, the platform is accessed via laptops at school. Now, the platform is accessed through cell phones, either though Moodle app or web to comply with social distancing.
- Roman Troxler: are you considering providing equipment beyond mobile phones to students. Or support them with data volume for their phones?
  S4J: S4J is collaborating with mobile companies so they provide free access to the platform. This situation was not foreseen in our plan and in terms of sustainability, we are in favour of either sponsorship agreements (we have experience with Microsoft on their "shape the future" program providing discounts for operating systems) or public funding.
  SNBI: This is a big issue that cannot be solved in many low-tech contexts. During the Ebola-crisis, radio programmes in combination with SMS services for simple phone have proven as a way to address poor households.
- Phallin Hello, I heard that you recommended the "Module Based Platform" which is available on Mobile Phone? Is there anything to control students' work?
  S4J: The platform allows tracing students activity e.g, when the platform was accessed, whether a certain class or material was read/accessed, assessment results, IP etc. Individualised reports and profiles can be built.

5 Content design, production and delivery

- Pius Frick: I assume the teachers are **designing the learning units** individually (or in groups?). Is there a QA-mechanism, and if so, is this QA hindering involvement of teachers.

  S4J: QA of content development

- o This is the step by step process we are following: Content is developed by selected teachers ▢ reviewed by peers ▢ uploaded using interactive functionalities ▢ students are registered ▢ user feedback is received and reflected
- Vodita, Oana GIZ MD: What is your experience with **design and delivery of contents** related to **in-company training**? I refer here to dual programmes with 70% in company.
  S4J: Our approach so far was not to design courses for in-company training but to deliver as much as possible the practical components of the national frame curricula as work-based learning in partnership with business partners. Mesovet.al is assisting in preparation before students start apprenticeship, mainly through basic working rules and standards related to hygiene. Students documented work during apprenticeship are elaborated by teachers and used as learning materials.

6   Teacher training and support

- Zuber Anton Andri EDA ZUO: Can you give 3 examples each for **pedagogical do's and don'ts** that you gave in the teacher trainings?
  S4J: As per do's: i) technology is a tool and it should be used as per needs and objective; ii) technology should be used to humanise the process of teaching and learning allowing interaction and fun through leanring; iii) teacher is a facilitator: especially in VET, where students bring many experiences from their apprenticeship, there is the possibility for a constructivist approach
- On the don'ts side, especially during these distant learning time i) distant learning teaching plan, objectives, materials and routines shouldn't be the same as in direct learning; ii) don't overload with just sending materials and assignments but spend time for the learning process; iii) don't apply schedules as in class but allow higher flexibility based on outcomes.
- Pius Frick: how are you **motivating / incentivizing teachers** to engage in producing online teaching units? After all, it is not easy, and people usually fear to expose themselves.
  S4J: developing content is part of VET teachers job description. Furthermore, teachers are commissioned by national agencies for system level materials and we are capacitating them as developers increasing chances for these expert engagements. Communities of Practice were established, and collaborative working helped in a higher acceptance of peers' work and creating a culture of sharing.

7   Open questions: Join our Community of Practice!

Several of the questions above we could only deal with superficially.

We invite you to **discuss these and further questions in the Community of Practice** that we will launch on **May 7th and 8th**.

e+i also offers you the opportunity to discuss your specific needs with an ICT4VET expert in an individual one-hour session (Contact: urs.groehbiel@snbi.ch).