

Lecturers' Self-Assessment of the Transition from In-Person to Distance Learning

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Abstract

In 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic precipitated an abrupt transition to distance learning across educational institutions worldwide. This sudden shift afforded educators minimal preparation time, thereby presenting considerable challenges in sustaining both the continuity and the quality of education. The study at Tallinn Health Care College, involving 20 lecturers, focused on the application of academic ethics in a distance learning environment. Through semi-structured interviews, these educators evaluated their readiness and adaptation to this new mode of instruction.

The majority of lecturers reported a successful transition, highlighting the innovative development of new teaching materials and methods that emerged from moving beyond traditional classroom boundaries. Educators with prior distance learning experience reported a smoother transition, underscoring the importance of previous exposure to digital teaching tools.

However, the rapid change also brought to light significant challenges, including the need for swift skill acquisition and the high potential for errors that could impact learning outcomes. Collaborative discussions and the exchange of experiences among colleagues proved instrumental in navigating these challenges. While distance learning has now become an integral part of the educational framework, there remains a critical need for structured discussions and the sharing of best practices to enhance its effectiveness.

In conclusion, the experience of transitioning to distance education varied among educators, but has now been normalized as a component of the educational process. Continual engagement and knowledge exchange on distance learning strategies are essential to refine educational practices and support ongoing improvement.

Keywords: academic staff; communication; distance learning; higher education; teaching