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Beyond the Virtual Classroom: An App-Based Didactic Model for Flexible, Interactive and Self-Regulated Online Learning

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Abstract

This contribution presents the didactic model of INU – Innovative University of Applied Sciences as an innovative response to the changing learning behaviour of today's students. Against the background of increasing digital connectivity, shorter attention spans and fragmented learning routines, INU designs online higher education as a structured combination of flexibility, interaction and guided self-regulation. Instead of transferring traditional 90-minute lectures into a digital format, the model is based on short learning units, asynchronous learning phases, interactive live sessions, digital self-assessments and activating elements such as quizzes, reflection tasks and case-based discussions.

A central element of this approach is that the entire learning experience is presented and organised through an in-house developed INU app. The app serves as an integrated digital learning companion and provides access to learning materials, live online classes, self-assessments, exam registration, grades, certificates, the online library and communication functions. Accessible via smartphone, tablet and browser, it enables students to study flexibly while remaining connected to their cohort, lecturers and university.

The innovative character of the INU model lies in the systematic orchestration of technology, didactics and personal support. The app does not merely distribute content; it structures the learning journey, supports self-organisation, displays upcoming lessons, enables progress monitoring and strengthens student engagement. Combined with cohort-based study groups, synchronous interaction and personal lecturer support, the model promotes accessibility, motivation and academic quality. Thus, INU conceptualises technology not as a substitute for teaching, but as a digital learning coach supporting active, self-regulated and future-oriented higher education.

Keywords: Digital Learning; Future Skills; Learning App; Micro-Learning; Self-Regulated Learning