



KMOP Education & Innovation Hub

18 April 2023

Distance learning as it is experienced by its users

Based on 6¹ country reports² (including desk research, focus groups and mobile ethnography)

In recent years, education has seen a shift from physical spaces to online learning, or e-learning. While this new type of learning comes with its own set of benefits, there are also some disadvantages. Nonetheless, e-learning was quite positively met by the academic community until the time when most of the world had to turn to distance learning due to the global pandemic of COVID-19. During the crisis, many academic institutions, students and teachers went through a turbulent experience switching fully to online education. The PLACEDU research explored the impact of online learning in 6 different countries, highlighting the need for a variety of solutions to choose from.

Country specific context

While all countries share quite similar challenges and possibilities related to distance learning, there are also some unique features that could be perceived country-specific:

Greece:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Greece implemented e-learning as a response to the closure of all levels of education. The transition to distance learning was abrupt and not part of a structured process. Most teachers were not adequately prepared and lacked prior experience in e-learning, and universities did not provide sufficient training for tutors. Depending on the specifics of each department or each course there were alternatives, the method of synchronous or asynchronous teaching or a combination of both. Synchronous classes were conducted through videoconferencing, following the regular timetable, while asynchronous classes utilised the universities' e-learning systems. This new educational normality lasted from March 2020 until October 2021, when lessons gradually shifted back to face-to-face teaching. The experience led to increased expertise in e-learning for teachers, familiarity with digital learning methods for students, and improved online administrative structures within universities. Distance education in Greece can yield impressive results with proper planning, a strategic approach, and successful implementation at the national level.

PLACEDU project will form a platform where a variety of challenges in remote education will be addressed. Additionally, training will be created in order to enhance teachers' competencies.

- Although there are some measures that have been taken, it is obvious that teachers need more training for e-teaching and students need more training for e-learning.

¹ Lithuania, Slovenia, Cyprus, Belgium, Iceland, Greece

² Different country reports can be reached on our platform



- It is important to rethink classes in a new setting and understand that some features that have been working during face-to-face classes, may not work in a virtual environment.
- Inevitably, one should strive for all classes (if this is possible) to be more interactive and encourage active student participation. Online classrooms should not be used only as a repository for materials and as support but also as an interactive learning environment.

PLACEDU will **strengthen digital skills** as a transversal topic of the curriculum. The switch to online learning has exacerbated existing educational inequalities resulting both in learning losses and in educational disengagement. Support is needed for academic and administrative staff at education institutions on how to replace on-site teaching with online delivery. Teaching methods, textbooks, etc. need to be adapted for distance education, and a qualitative upgrade at many levels of teaching, use of technology, etc. is needed.

However, **the focus will be on teachers and students' physical and mental well-being**. As regular contact between students and teachers can help improve motivation and engagement in the learning process, it is key to foster a more direct exchange between educators and learners.

So, what will be the next normal in education? How will it look and feel like?

Are demotivated students and teachers staring at a black screen the **NEXT NORMAL** in education?

PLACEDU will do its best to tackle the drawbacks of distance learning.

The PLACEDU Project Coordinator, Zemartas Budrys stated:

“The aim of the project is to draw attention to the drawbacks of distance learning and address them. By providing a range of tools and methods designed to combat isolation, facilitate communication and social interaction, and support the mental and emotional well-being of both students and teachers, PLACE has the potential to significantly improve the quality and effectiveness of online learning. This is an important development that will help to ensure that students have access to high-quality education, regardless of their location or circumstances.”

KMOP's Unit of Education Coordinator, Eirianna Dragona stated:

“PLACEDU in Greece will prioritise strengthening digital skills in the curriculum and addressing educational disparities caused by online learning. It will provide support to academic and administrative staff in transitioning to online teaching methods and adapting resources for distance education. Additionally, PLACEDU will focus on promoting the physical and mental well-being of teachers and students, fostering regular communication and direct interaction to enhance motivation and engagement in the learning process.”



Co-funded by
the European Union

For more information about the project visit <https://placedu-project.com/>



PLACEDU



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The PLACEDU project is implemented by **7 partners** from 6 countries: Lithuania (XWHY and Vilnius University), Slovenia (University of Ljubljana), Cyprus (CSI), Belgium (OTB International), Iceland (University of Island), and Greece (KMOP Education & Innovation Hub).

The project is co-financed by the Erasmus+ KA2 Programme of the European Commission.