



Sharing experience of implementing teacher training seminars to a wider academic community

FINAL REPORT
INNOVAEDU COORDINATORS

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Preface

The following report has been prepared by the main coordinators of the InnovaEDU network with the aim to outline the rationale of the project - "Learn to Te(a)ch seminar series: development, dissemination and integration of innovative teaching methods"; its implementation strategy and methodology; the main outcomes and lessons learned. Our main target audience, in this respect, is teaching staff, educational technologists and academic affairs specialists who are interested in applying for Nordplus development projects, focusing on fostering innovative teaching methods in their respective home universities. We hope that the following report will provide useful insight information on the best practices of planning and implementing such projects, especially in light of unpredictable circumstances such as the global pandemic.

The following report is structured in the following way: it starts with a brief introduction to the rationale of the network and seminar series, highlighting the rapid trends of digitalisation and innovative teaching methods of partner universities. After depicting the context of the project, we delve deeper into the methodological design of seminar series, unveiling the nuts and bolts of implementing the training. In the next section of the report, we included a short clause on the ways the global pandemic affected the original timeline and plans for the implementation of project activities, examining the network's strategy to mitigate the following situation. The first part of the report concludes with a description of seminars conducted in Tartu; Uppsala and Aarhus. The second part of the report focuses on the impact and project deliverables, as well as the feedback from seminar series' participants and lessons learned from the coordinators of the network. The report concludes with a section, looking at the future implication of the following seminar series and its potential applicability in other educational settings.

In addition to the written text, our report is complemented by multimedia material and short video clips from the main coordinator of the network, sharing more in-depth testimonials on the various aspects of the project implementation.

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May 2021

The project has received funding from the Nordplus programme: project ID - NPHE-2019/10052.

Introduction to and rationale of the "Learn to Te(a)ch seminar series"

Over the recent years, ICT technologies have transformed the notion of learning processes, bringing them to multiple spaces and realities. The following developments impact the way a new generation of students uses study resources to gain new knowledge, skills and competences. According to the survey conducted by the Task Force on the Future of MIT Education, over 65% of bachelors and over 70% of masters students (from 941 respondents) preferred some online components in their learning environment.¹

The global trends in higher education are also reflected in the partner universities: over 350 distance courses has been offered during the last academic year (Uppsala, Tartu)²; around 10 million euros has been invested in a strategic project to convert more courses into blended learning format (Aarhus); interdisciplinary degree programs with highly dynamic and flexible environments have been designed (RGSL) and a network of VR labs across campuses has been built to test new forms of teaching (NTNU).

The following changes present both the teaching staff and educational developers at partner universities and across Europe with new challenges related to a) smooth integration of new innovations in methods and technologies into curricula and balanced diffusion of know-how among the university staff b) diversification of multiple levels of learning spaces at a consistent and competitive degrees; c) efficiency in combining various teaching methods to address students' skills with the changing landscape of labour market.

While there have been numerous attempts to increase digital capacities of teaching staff and upgrade learning facilities of universities, the overall trend in Europe seems to show fragmentation in effectively combining various teaching methods and environments. This issue is often related to universities' structural challenges of managing supporting structures responsible for innovative practices, quality assurance and teachers' training. The EADTU status report (2017) indicates that many European HEIs interested in developing innovative initiatives are often missing or unaware of regional support structures.³ While sources such as OpenupEd and Empower Higher Education provide general guidance, currently there is no comprehensive, open platform in the Nordic-Baltic region, containing extensive didactic material and training possibilities for academic staff and educational developers.

In this regard, the interdisciplinary consortium - **InnovaEDU** - brought together five innovation-oriented universities from the Nordic-Baltic region (University of Tartu, Uppsala University; Aarhus University; Riga Graduate School of Law; and Norwegian University of Science and Technology) with expertise in blended and online teaching environments under one umbrella. Each partner holds strong competences and can enrich other partners in the network through sharing knowledge related respectively to a) implementation of online courses on various platforms (Moodle, FutureLearn); b) recognition and integration of MOOCs into curricula (RPL system); c) quality assurance in online

¹ The Institute-wide Task Force on the Future of MIT Education. *Reinventing MIT Education together*, 2013. Accessible at: <https://future.mit.edu>

² University of Tartu, *E-learning statistics*, 2018. Accessible at: <https://etu.ut.ee/2018/e-oppe-statistika-2017/>; and Uppsala University, *Distance Teaching at Uppsala University*, accessible at: <https://www.uu.se/en/about-uu/quality/learning/e-learning/distance-teaching/>

³ EADTU (2017). *The Envisioning Report for Empowering Universities*. Accessible at: http://empower.eadtu.eu/images/report/The_Envisioning_Report_for_Empowering_Universities_1st_edition_2017.pdf

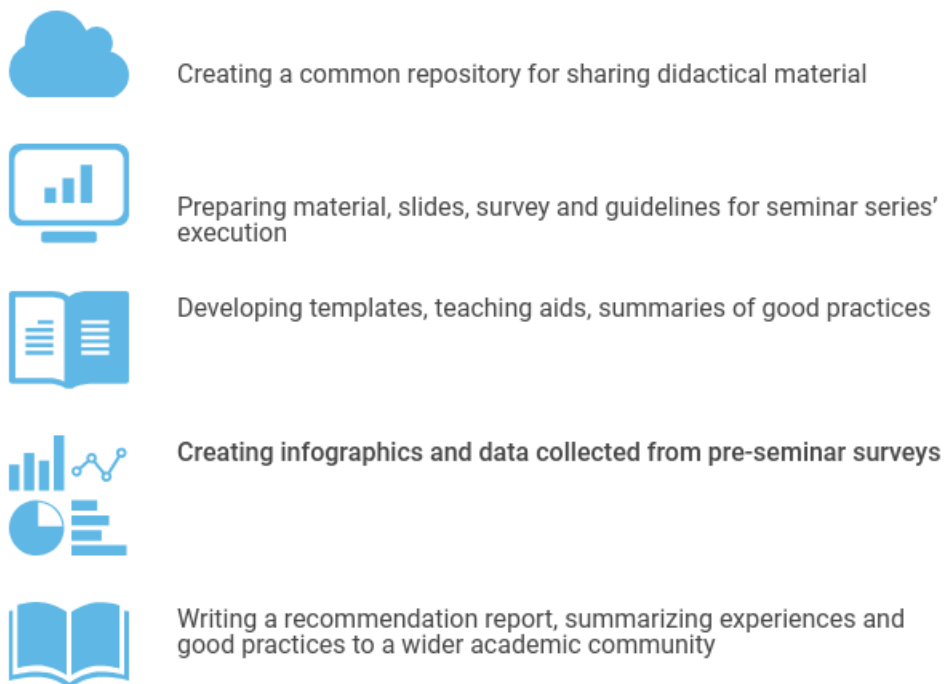
courses (OpenupEd Quality Label); d) integration of flexible and virtual infrastructure in learning spaces (Experimental classroom; VR Labs) and e) networking and research activities in educational innovation.

The network relied on the pre-existing ties and successful cooperation of participating universities within the frameworks of Coimbra group, the U4 network, Horizon 2020 projects, Erasmus+ mobility visits and previous Nordplus cooperation; all of which contributes to a long tradition of sustainable cooperation and favours the exchange and consolidation of horizontal good practices.

By bringing together poles of excellence in different domains of teaching, the network's objective was to facilitate the transfer of know-how and harmonize teaching practices among the partners. It aims to provide a unified medium for developing learning spaces at multiple levels, which is currently lacking in the Nordic-Baltic context, as well as equip the teaching staff and educational developers with practical knowledge.

In order to achieve these goals, the members of the network developed a seminar series, entitled "Learn to Te(a)ch", based on three working packages: WP1 Digital; WP2 Flexible Learning Space and WP3 Pedagogical and Networking.

Upon completion of the seminar series, the network plans to achieve the following tangible outcomes (please see infographic below), which could be used in a long-term perspective to facilitate and develop further pedagogical skills and capacities of partner universities:



Source: Anna Beitane, "Nordplus outcomes", created on Infogram.com, accessible [here](#).

Watch video: [Rationale of the project](#)

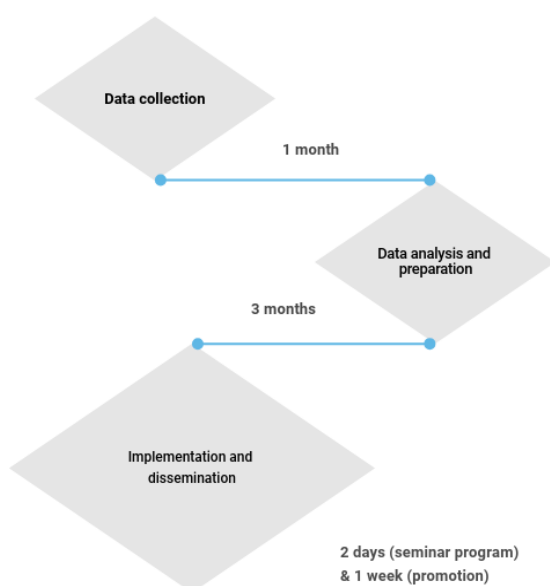
Methodology of seminar series implementation

The methodological design of the seminar series was built upon the situative perspective on learning theories, where "knowledge is seen as situated in the practices of communities" (Mayes and de Freitas, 2004:9) and transfer of knowledge and good teaching practices occurs as a result of a participant's ability to successfully engage and take part in those practices. According to the situative perspective and in the words of Mayes and de Freitas (2004:19), "the essence of a community of practice is that, through joint engagement in some activity, an aggregation of people come to develop and share practices." The following community of practice is perceived as a "stable and relatively enduring group, whose practices involve the development of a constellation of beliefs, attitudes, values and specific knowledge built up over many years" (Mayes and de Freitas, 2004:20).

Looking at the context of InnovaEDU network, the core target group of the "community of practice" for seminar series were teaching staff and educational developers of partner universities. In this respect, the "community of practice" were tasked to discuss and share their practices around the following three core issues, selected by the network under consideration and planned for seminar programs:

- **WP1 Digital Package** (seminar in Tartu) - aimed at enhancing ICT skills and covers topics related to development of online content and instructional design in online and blended environments.
- **WP2 Flexible learning spaces package** (seminar in Uppsala) - aimed at enriching the knowledge on the impact of flexible infrastructure and covers topics related to integration of experimental classrooms and other interactive learning arenas in learning spaces.
- **WP3 Pedagogical and networking package** (seminar in Aarhus) - aimed at sharing expertise on new teaching methods (e.g., student-centered learning; PBL, etc.) and covers topics related to applicability of these methods in the classroom.

To accommodate and facilitate the transfer of good teaching practices throughout the seminar series, the network developed a consistent design for preparation and implementation of its teacher training activities, which could be seen on the scheme below:



Source: Anna Beitane, "Nordplus implementation timeline", created on Infogram.com, accessible [here](#).

From the following scheme it is important to distinguish the following components:

- *Data collection* - usually entailed the process of fulfilment of a small "**pre-seminar**" task, which gave an opportunity for a participant to reflect on their teaching and administrative practices before the collegial discussion. The pre-seminar task entailed either a shortly written contribution/reflection and/or video/audio clip, summarizing and sharing perspective on the topic of seminar discussion.
- *Data analysis and preparation* - included the network's coordinators ability to analyse submission; group them for respective seminar activities; and further customize the program of the training, according to the needs and issues identified in the pre-seminar submissions.
- *Implementation of seminar and dissemination* - entailed the process of running the seminar sessions; moderation and facilitation of discussions; presentation of findings; and follow up dissemination efforts of sharing the outcomes of the seminar in respective partner universities upon the completion of the seminar.

The following structure and approach have been repeated for each respective seminar planned with the framework of "Learn to Te(a)ch series".

Watch video: [Methodology](#)

Force-majeure: managing the seminar series in the context of COVID-19 pandemic

Before proceeding further with the description of separate seminars, it is important to identify and provide a crucial obstacle which affected the original plans and nature of the seminar series. The following project received funding in the late spring of 2019 and envisioned physical travel of partner universities to three locations: Tartu (October 2019); Uppsala (March 2020); and Aarhus (late August/early September 2020). Due to the global pandemic, which originated in late December of 2019, the network managed to complete only one physical training in Tartu. It was decided by the network to postpone the date for Uppsala's seminar execution in mid-March of 2020, subsequently shifting the date of the seminar to mid-September. In the meantime, the coordinators of the network decided to use the opportunity offered by the Finnish National Agency for Education to extend the length of the project, which was originally planned to end in May of 2020, for one more year, bringing the end of the project to May of 2021; and, thus, shifting the date of Aarhus seminar to March of 2021.

While the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the original plans for the implementation of seminar series in its original format due to restrictions on travel in the region and cancelation of any physical teaching and training possibilities on the premises of educational institutions; all seminar trainings were implemented according to the re-adjusted schedule in a new digital format, and ensured necessary participants' turnout.

The coordinators of the network believe that the following components played an important role in ensuring continuous and interrupted planning of network's activities in light of the new unforeseen environment:

- constant and frequent communication between partners through the means of email and videoconferencing about the situation in their respective home-countries and re-adjustment of plans according to the latest infection trends and restrictions;
- creation of scenario-based possibilities for re-adjustment of seminars' formats and open brainstorming about pros and cons of such re-adjustment;
- coordination of network's plans for re-adjustment of seminars with the Finish National Agency for Education, and its flexibility in light of the new context;
- clear and timely communication with the selected participants of the seminar about foreseen plans and re-adjustments in the organizational and logical plans of the seminars.

Watch video: [Force-majeure](#)

Examples and overview of trainings in Tartu, Uppsala, Aarhus

Seminar in Tartu: "Designing and delivering courses in an online and blended environment: tools, methods, processes and challenges"

The seminar in Tartu took place between October 22-23, 2019. The main aim of the seminar was to provide participants with the tips and cases of effective implementation of instructional design in an online and blended environment. The seminar adapted a hands-on and practical approach in arranging the program and relied on the lecturers' submitted case studies. Before the start of the seminar, all participants were required to fill in the pre-seminar form, which could be found [via the following link](#), and prepare a pre-seminar [task](#).

The [seminar program](#) was organized around a pitch session, where lecturers presented their courses and later proceeded into a small "hackathon/brainstorming session", where pitches were grouped together on the basis of similarity. Organizers of the seminar provided the participants with a framework for brainstorming and potential hints/solutions, which were pre-made before the start of the seminar and served as a basis for brainstorming discussion. After brainstorming was over, each group presented their solution to the rest of the participants and received follow-up advice from the "panel" of educational technologists/designers represented by the Nordplus partners. At the end of the seminar, participants were given the possibility to provide feedback or raise some aspects that haven't been addressed during the seminar in an open mic session. Self-reflective forms were also given out at the end of the seminar, to give the participants a chance to reflect on the experience.

Watch video: [Tartu seminar](#)

Follow up read: see "Summary of good teaching practices, Tartu seminar" (see Appendix 1)

Seminar in Uppsala: "Navigating Learning Spaces"

Due to the Covid-19 situation, the seminar took place online on September 16 and 17 2020, combining two real-time sessions in Zoom with some asynchronous activities, carried out on Moodle.

An overarching goal of the seminar was to affirm the use of learning spaces for a course as a conscious, pedagogical choice, and as an integrated part of your teaching strategies – and not only a matter of finding a sufficiently large room with a projector!

In preparation for the seminar, all participants were required to submit examples of challenges, to which they were looking for solutions, and that they wished to discuss at the seminar. The seminar was differentiated for the participants with current or recent teaching experiences; and participants who serve an administrative, managerial or support function. Detailed description of the pre-task could be found [here](#).

The event was organized around several crucial topics: the morning's first round of workshops was devoted to suggesting solutions to the challenges and dilemmas that the participating teachers have uploaded in their pre-tasks. During the second workshop, the organisers will bring up for discussion various themes that circle around emerging pedagogical practices, which rely on the use of digital tools and resources in campus settings (including some that concern the current, Covid-19-induced situation). After the first round of workshops - participants were required to get familiar with the video study tours of various learning spaces and reply to Moodle forum questions, facilitated by the seminar organizers.

On the second day, participants turned to discussion concerning the creation and use of new learning spaces for teachers and students. Different themes were discussed, in short sprints, where short introductions and presentations are followed by small group discussions or other activities. Detailed program of the seminar is available [here](#).

Watch video: [Uppsala seminar](#)

Follow up read: see "Summary of good teaching practices, Uppsala seminar" (see Appendix 2)

Seminar in Aarhus: "Student-Centered Learning"

The seminar in Aarhus was planned for March 22-23, 2021 in an online environment, combining real-time sessions in Zoom with some asynchronous activities, carried out on Moodle.

The main topic of the seminar was focused on "Student-centered learning" (SCL). The following concept has been included in the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). However, there is no clear definition of what Student-centred Learning is. In this workshop we are going to discuss - how do we as teachers, course developers, pedagogical experts, study programme designers - see student-centred learning? If we should define it – how can this definition be conceptualized? How can we implement Student-centred Learning in an online/hybrid teaching model? These – and other questions – will form the centre of the discussion and sharing of good practice at the workshop.

Before the seminar participants were asked to fulfil the pre-task, which was differentiated for teaching and administrative staff members and included a written submission complemented by a video/audio reflection. Detailed description of the exercise can be found [here](#). The seminar program was organized around central themes such as the definition of SCL; SCL and different teaching methods; facilities/learning spaces for SCL; SCL in a hybrid and online environment. The seminar was finalised with a mock trial, where SCL was assessed by the team of prosecutors and defence. A detailed program of the seminar can be found [here](#).

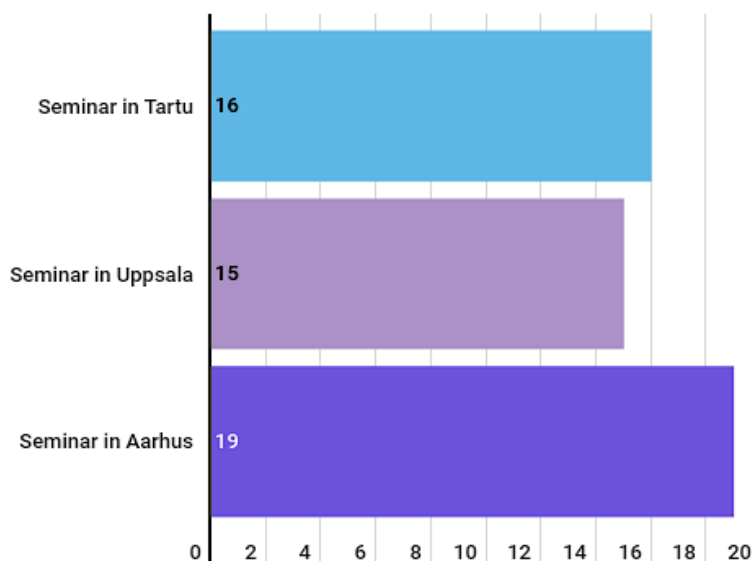
Watch video: [Aarhus seminar](#)

Follow up read: see "Summary of good teaching practices, Aarhus seminar" (see Appendix 3)

Overview of the results and impact

Overview of seminars' attendance and feedback from seminar participants

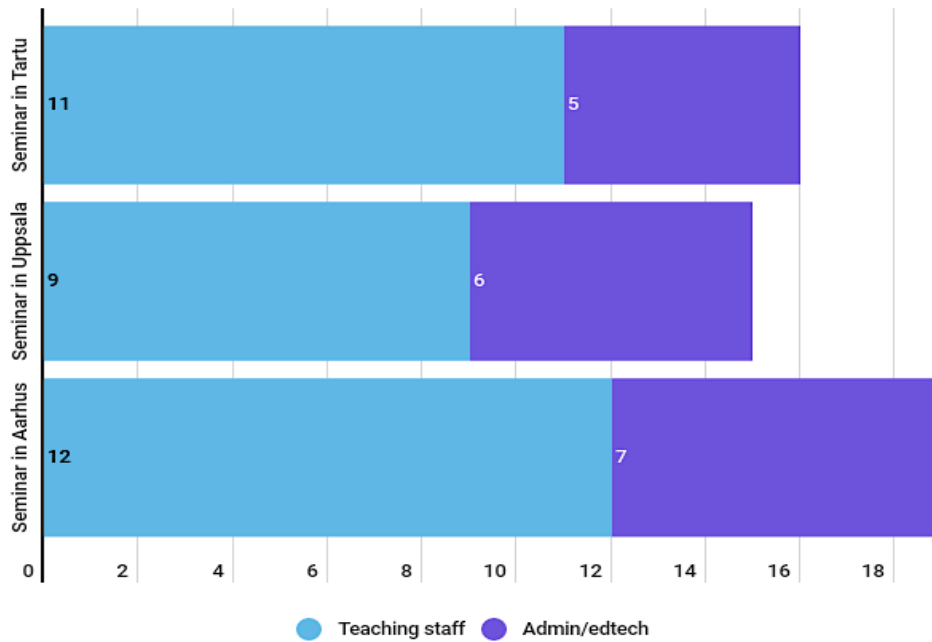
The network aimed to attract at least 15 participants from all partners (3 participants per partner, per seminar), keeping in mind the right balance between teaching staff and educational developers. The data collected from the registration forms shows the following distribution of total number of participants:



Source: Anna Beitane, registration forms for InnovaEDU seminars, 2019 - 2021, created on Infogram.com, accessible [here](#).

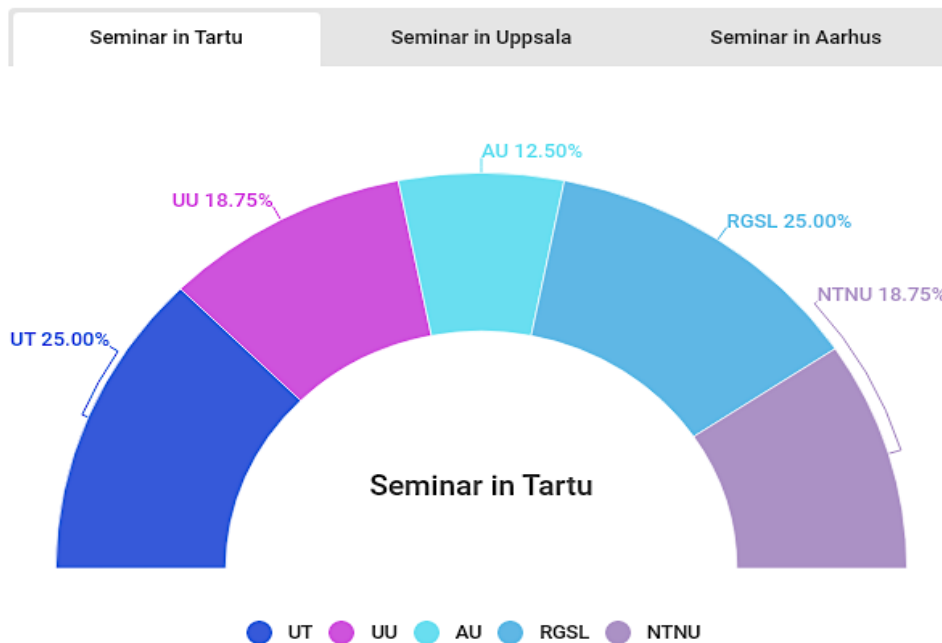
Despite unforeseen circumstances and changes in the seminar format, the total number of participants throughout the seminar series didn't drop below 15 participants and remained quite stable, picking at 19 participants for the final virtual seminar hosted by Aarhus University. The slight drop of participation for Uppsala seminar could be explained by changes in the original dates of the physical seminar in Uppsala for the autumn semester due to COVID-19 restrictions; and as well as the change of the format of the seminar from physical setting to online dimension. Seminar in Aarhus was planned as an online event from the start and thus, the network coordinators managed to communicate the call for applications early on and set the expectations for the potential attendees of the seminar.

In this regard, the division between the administrative and academic staff was also balanced throughout the seminars:



Source: Anna Beitane, registration forms for InnovaEDU seminars, 2019 - 2021, created on Infogram.com, accessible [here](#).

The distribution numbers of attendees per seminar per partner are depicted in the chart presented below:

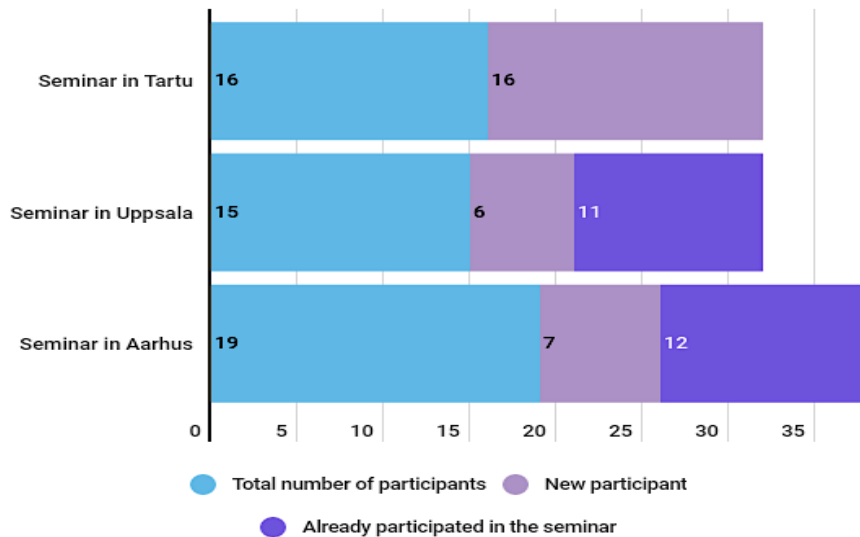


Source: Anna Beitane, registration forms for InnovaEDU seminars, 2019 - 2021, created on Infogram.com, accessible [here](#).

It could be argued that the highest attendance numbers throughout the seminar series were shown by the participants from the University of Tartu and Riga Graduate School of Law; Uppsala University

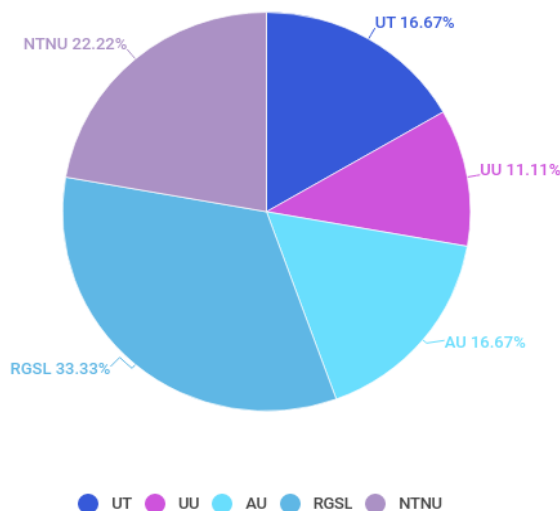
provided the stable number of participants during the series; while NTNU experienced a slight decline in number of participation at the end of the series; whereas for participants from Aarhus there was a slight increase in the number of attendance. The following trend could be explained by a flexible recruitment approach decided by the network, for example, the initially recruited lecturers from Uppsala University were interested to participate in all three seminars right at the beginning of the project (the following tendency could be also seen for some participants from the University of Tartu and Riga Graduate School of Law); while participants from Aarhus and NTNU varied from seminar to seminar.

In this respect, the seminar attached in total 29 unique participants as it is depicted on the chart below



Source: Anna Beitane, registration forms for InnovaEDU seminars, 2019 - 2021, created on Infogram.com , accessible [here](#).

Upon conclusion of the seminar series, the coordinators of the network conducted a brief survey among the participants of the seminars, which was filled in by 62% of seminar attendees or 18 participants. The feedback sample in the survey was also more or less equally represented among the network's partners:



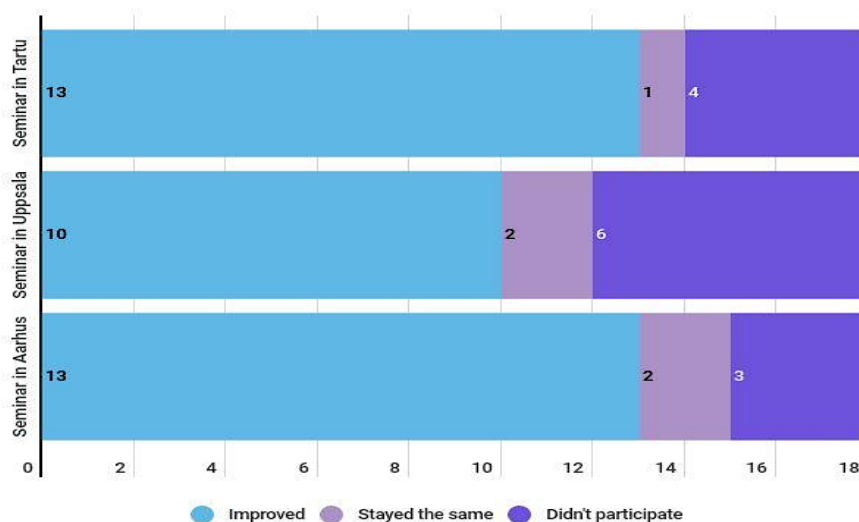
Source: Google forms "[Providing feedback on InnovaEDU seminars](#)", April 29, 2021, created on Infogram.com, accessible [here](#).

In the survey, participants were asked to rate their overall experience of participation in the seminars; whether the following seminar improved their knowledge of discussed teaching methods; as well as share their main take-aways from the training.

All in all, the respondents of the survey, evaluated their overall experience of participation in the seminar series in a positive way, highlighting the strengths of bringing a diverse set of partner universities on board of the project. The reflections from the form mention the following aspects:

- "A warm and welcoming experience. Having the possibility to discuss with colleagues across nations and educational cultures gives new perspectives on common problems and in sum, advances HE."
- "Excellent pairing of partners and competences. Friendly and inclusive environment. Professional design of the seminar days to facilitate discussions and development."
- "They were each very different, but I enjoyed all of them a lot because they provided exchange opportunities with colleagues from different countries and various academic fields."
- "It was a very interesting and inspiring seminar which I enjoyed participating in. There were many nice and interesting meetings with other Nordic colleagues."
- "The event was informative, well-planned and gave ample room for discussion."

Looking at the evaluation of participants' knowledge of the topic, it could be argued that throughout the seminar series, the overall level of awareness has either significantly or slightly improved for the participants. Only small minority in the survey, mentioned that they knowledge of the topic stayed the same:



Source: Google forms "[Providing feedback on InnovaEDU seminars](#)", April 29, 2021, accessible [here](#).

Referring to the main take-aways taken from the seminar series, it could be argued that the majority of participants appreciated the possibility to reflect on their own teaching practices and compare it to the examples of other partner universities. Participants of the seminar series also valued the opportunity to hear about concrete suggestions in connection to various digital tools and instructional design solutions to solve pedagogical problems experienced in the course. Listed below are some of the excerpts, collected from the feedback form:

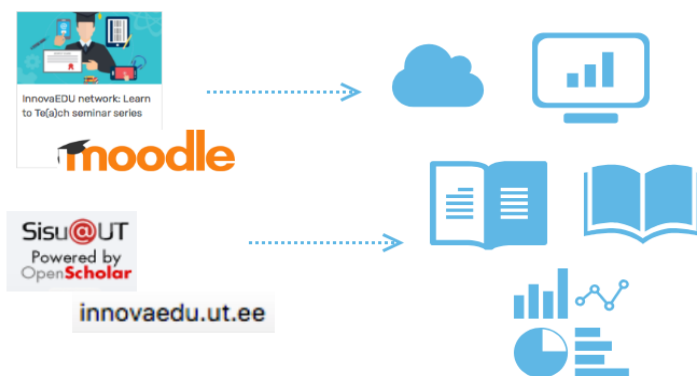
- "Perhaps a knowledge of the challenges of the wider teaching community; the understanding of potential directions my teaching could take - so in many ways it has confirmed me that some of my guesses/ impressions have been correct and the issues I've started to pay attention to should be developed further."
- "Mostly, it has raised my awareness of some aspects so that I approach them more consciously in the design of my courses. In addition, I took inspiration regarding smaller, more practical aspects - often from the exchange with colleagues."
- "It was very interesting to compare challenges and possible solutions with colleagues from several, different countries. I learned about additional, nuanced ways to reach the objectives of student-centered learning."
- "It was insightful to stop and reflect on the day-to-day teaching process and how it can be improved."
- "Learned new tools and strategies for blended learning. It has been very useful, and I am using several of them in my teaching."
- "New teaching techniques and also hearing and learning from others' experiences, what works and more importantly what doesn't work and why, this has been quite useful."

Finally, when reflecting on whether the following seminar series helped them to find new contacts and ideas for collaboration, the survey respondents replied that the seminars facilitate a fruitful medium for cooperation, bringing them closer to their own colleagues and/or providing them with the new perspectives to approach their teaching. Some of the excerpts from the feedback form include the reflections as follows:

- "I got to connect closer with my colleagues from NTNU, with possibilities for new ideas and projects from that."
- "I received some useful references to both literature and tools which I intend to look up one day and use them to improve my teaching and student engagement."
- "I have started two new conversations with representatives of other institutions on possible cooperation in the future."
- "Yes, it has provided a great opportunity in sharing some practical tips and ideas with colleagues in the faculty."
- "It has mainly resulted in more ideas about the teaching. I participated only in the last seminar; thus, I had less time to establish firm contacts."

Description of the final deliverables

Upon completion of the seminar series, the network has developed the following materials and repositories of results, which could be accessible to a wider teaching community:



Source: Anna Beitane, "Nordplus final deliverables", created on Infogram.com, accessible [here](#).

[Moodle page of InnovaEDU](#) - the network has developed a comprehensive page on the Learning Management System of the University of Tartu - Moodle, which serves as the main repository for sharing didactic materials; hosting seminar materials, guidelines for seminars' execution and slides; submission space of the pre-seminar tasks and surveys. It also serves as the communication platform between seminar participants and network coordinators. The following page proved its functionality both for physical, and especially online events. The following page has the possibility of a guest access and can be accessed by any external viewer with a key code (information can be requested from the main coordinator of the network - Anna Beitane, anna.beitane@ut.ee).

The initial idea of the project focused on the development of a common repository hosted by a shared folder in Google Drive, however, as the project developed and in light of the shift of seminar series to full online medium, it became clear that a shared Google folder will not fulfill the necessary functional requirements. In this respect, it was decided to create a shared repository that will not only store the didactic material and preparational documents from the seminars, which could be accessible during and after the seminar series, but will also allow the participants and coordinators to communicate between each other during the project and foster a more collaborative-centric environment. In this regard, the Learning Management System of the University of Tartu - Moodle - very sufficiently fulfilled that purpose. The following Moodle page could be used as a medium for preparing and conducting teacher training seminars among the partner universities as well as a useful database storing relevant didactic material on innovative teaching methods.

A brief snapshot of the Moodle page is depicted below.

InnovaEDU network: Learn to Te(a)ch seminar series

Dashboard / InnovaEDU

Assignments
Forums
Journals
Resources

Administration

- Course administration
 - Edit settings
 - Course completion
 - Users
 - Filters
 - Reports
 - Gradebook setup
 - Grades
 - Backup
 - Restore
 - Import
 - Reset course
 - Question bank
 - Legacy course files
 - Switch role to...
 - Request MS Teams integration
 - Reminders

Nordplus
UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
UPPSALA UNIVERSITET
RIGA GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LAW
AARHUS UNIVERSITY
NTNU

Welcome to InnovaEDU network Moodle page!

InnovaEDU is an educational consortium supported by Nordplus scheme, which brings together five innovation-oriented universities in the Nordic-Baltic region to facilitate the multi-level transfer of know-how and innovation in online and blended learning methods.

In the following online environment you will be able to:

- find helpful information about the project and its objectives
- access seminar and other support material
- communicate with other network and seminar participants
- leave your feedback and ideas about seminars' activities and program

Should you encounter any problems with using Moodle or the current page, please address your inquiry to: anna.beitane@ut.ee

Brief description of the project

Open all Close all

Instructions: Clicking on the section name will show / hide the section.

- InnovaEDU seminar in Tartu (October 22-23, 2019)
- InnovaEDU seminar in Uppsala (Re-scheduled September 16-17, 2020) - Virtual event
- InnovaEDU seminar in Aarhus (March 22-23, 2021) - Virtual event

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Source: Moodle page of InnovaEDU

[OpenScholar website of InnovaEDU network](#) - in addition to Moodle page, which was aimed for more internal communication between the network partners and seminar participants during the training; the network also developed a publicly accessible website which contains detailed information about the structure of seminars; links to the programs; infographics and data collected from seminar surveys

on the innovative teaching trend in partner universities; as well as contains links and files to the summaries of **good teaching practices** (available in English; Danish, Estonian; Latvian; Norwegian and Swedish) as well as link to the copy of this report. The following page could serve as an important reference point for development of similar teacher trainings in the future, not just among the partner universities but amongst the broader academic community.

A brief snapshot of the OpenScholar website of InnovaEDU network is decrypted below.

Home

- About InnovaEDU consortium
- Learn to Te(a)ch seminar series ▾
- Learn to Te(a)ch good teaching practices ▾
- Contact us

Welcome to InnovaEDU page

Over the recent years, ICT technologies have transformed the notion of learning processes, bringing them to multiple spaces and realities. The following developments impact the way a new generation of students uses study resources to gain new knowledge, skills and competences. According to the survey conducted by Task Force on the Future of MIT Education (2013), over 65% of bachelor and over 70% of master students (from 941 respondents) preferred some online components in their learning environment.

The global trends in higher education are also reflected in the partner universities: over 350 distance courses has been offered during the last academic year (Uppsala, Tartu); around 10 million euros has been invested in a strategic project to convert more courses into blended learning format (Aarhus); interdisciplinary degree programs with highly dynamic and flexible environments have been designed (RGSL) and a network of VR labs across campuses has been built to test new forms of teaching (NTNU).

The following changes present both the teaching staff and educational developers at partner universities and across Europe with new challenges related to a) smooth integration of new innovations in methods and technologies into curricula and balanced diffusion of know-how among the university staff b) diversification of multiple levels of learning spaces at a consistent and competitive degrees; c) efficiency in combining various teaching methods to address students' skills with the changing landscape of labour market.

In this regard, the proposed interdisciplinary consortium brings together five innovation-oriented universities from the Nordic-Baltic region with expertise in blended and online teaching environments under one umbrella.

By bringing together poles of excellence in different domains of teaching, the network's objectives is to facilitate the transfer of know-how and harmonize teaching practices among the partners. It aims to provide unified medium for developing learning spaces at multiple levels, which is currently lacking in the Nordic-Baltic context, as well as equip the teaching staff with practical knowledge.

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This project has received funding from the Nordplus programme: project ID - NPHE-2019/10052.

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Lessons learned and testimonials from network coordinators

The following section contains reflections from the main coordinators of the network in regard to their experience of participating in the following project. The reflections, in particular, focus on the strengths of the project design and areas for improvements; applicability of good practices in their respective universities and lessons learned, which could be helpful for future applicants interested in the implementation of similar teacher training seminar series within the framework of Nordplus development projects.

Anna Beitane, the main coordinator of the project and organizers of the seminar in Tartu (University of Tartu)



I would like to start my reflection by providing some small background information about the overall context of this project. The following application was one of my first experiences of being the lead project manager, coordinating the network of five universities. In this regard, I would argue that despite all the difficulties created by the uncertainties of COVID-19 pandemic, the overall coordination of the project went smoothly and resulted in productive cooperation between partnering universities. I believe that there are several components that helped us to proceed with the activities and achieve our goals:

- *Pre-existing connections and networks*: even prior to writing a collective application for the Nordplus project, I collaborated separately with some of the partners in our newly formed InnovaEDU network. This was facilitated through various exchange opportunities within the Erasmus plus and Nordplus programs, where I managed to get in touch with our existing contact persons in Uppsala and Riga; as well as academic and research networks to which our universities belong to (Coimbra group; U4Society; etc.) - which helped to lay down the foundation for building a sense of community and socialisation between the partners.
- *Setting expectations and tools for projects management*: right at the start of our project, we had an early kick-off meeting to agree upon key co-ordinational issues: how and through which means do we prefer to communicate with each other; frequency of our communication and scheduling "status update meetings" to catch up on the overall progress with preparing for the seminars. We always kept the meeting agendas on track and minutes of the meeting - which helped us to review our decisions and reiterate if needed. In addition to our video-conference calls, we also kept relevant folders for storing our working documents among the coordinators in our shared Google drive folder; and additionally, we built the Moodle page for storing and hosting materials; as well as facilitating the discussions for our seminar series. The following tools proved to be particularly relevant, especially, when we had to shift fully to the online dimension of implementing our trainings for the teaching staff.
- *Flexibility and resilience*: as we faced the difficulties of implementing the original design and setup of our training in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, our network partners showed a sense of resilience. We were open to alternative ideas of implementing our activities. In this respect, we hosted the round of brainstorming sessions and quick sprints to pin our ideas and evaluate the feasibility of each scenario. We tried to look closely at the objectives of the training and find the most suitable digital alternative which would help us to achieve the desired results.

Looking at the seminar series in retrospective, I believe that there are certain lessons learned which could be taken into account for writing and executing similar applications and trainings:

- *Combining various formats of training*: considering that the following project focused on innovative teaching practices; and limitations faced as a result of the global pandemic, in the future, an applicant could consider combining more diverse formats of seminar program, including both in-person and online training possibilities to maximise desired outcomes. For example, a training could include a series of short online tutorials or webinars on the selected

seminar topic, which could be followed by a more profound group discussion in person. By combining blended or hybrid possibilities of training, a future network of partners not only helps the teaching staff to develop their digital competences and opportunity to reflect on their teaching practices; but also can develop a multimedia library with useful clips and tutorials, which could be helpful in the long-term perspective. The following circumstances showed that it is feasible to deliver high quality training in a digital environment and there are certain added benefits of hosting online seminars (such as reduced costs on travel; possibility to attract a higher number of attendees and reach broader audiences; possibility to record the training for future use, etc.).

- *Harmonizing recruitment tactics*: while we collaborated on writing the calls for applications for the seminars collectively, and our selected recruitment strategy of targeted marketing via specialized teaching lists proved to be quite effective, it could be argued that the network should have put more emphasis on highlighting more explicitly the added benefits of such training for the teaching staff (i.e. the possibility to receive a certificate of attendance; etc.), especially in light of the increased workload as a result of the pandemic.

At the same time, looking at the overall impact of the following project, it could be argued that the selected topics of discussion from blended and online learning to learning spaces and student-centered learning proved to be extremely relevant in light of the new teaching and learning context, providing both teaching staff and educational technologists with new tips and useful toolkits to navigate new realities of higher education. Throughout the duration of the project, we exchanged with various strategic university documents and other material, which gave an opportunity to learn more about relevant case studies and applicability of innovative teaching practices in partners' universities.

On several occasions, discussion and material produced within the framework of InnovaEDU seminars, were also presented at other university-wide conferences and workshops: for example, I led the workshop, entitled "Expanding the Frontiers of New Learning Spaces: Teaching and Learning in the post COVID-19 Environment" at the University of Tartu's Online teaching conference "[Õppejõult õppejõule: õppimise ja õpetamise ruumid](#)" /From teacher to teacher: learning and teaching spaces" on January 21st, 2021, in which I presented some of the results and models of learning spaces, discussed during the InnovaEDU seminar, hosted by Uppsala University, on September 16-17, 2020.

Finally, the following series of seminars also helped our institute to gain new ideas and perspectives on improving our own in-house teacher training seminars at the institute level (e.g., such as "Reflecting on remote teaching") by introducing us to new digital tools and training material.

The experience and contacts gained throughout the project proved to be invaluable and we have the ambition to continue collaborating with our partners in the future and develop further our innovative teaching methods.

Mat Cullhed, the main organizer of the seminar in Uppsala (Uppsala University)



I would like to comment of the following dimensions in my reflection:

- *The project:* The collaboration between partners has worked remarkably well. A crucial part has been played by the truly excellent administrative support and project management, provided by Anna Beitane and her collaborators at the University of Tartu. It has been a model for the efficient and smooth running of a collaborative effort such as this. The Moodle platform has also served the project well. The chosen form, with a joint project, based on collective discussions among the five partners, but with the actual responsibility for the final planning and conducting of each seminar devolved to the respective host partners (Tartu, Uppsala, and Aarhus) has also worked very well. Each of the three hosts has had ample scope for giving the seminars profiles of their own, but all partners have been able to contribute to the shaping of the programmes. It would, of course, have been interesting to have had all five partners arranging seminars, thus covering a broader spectrum of innovative teaching methods, but the three seminars have profited from the contributions of participants from all five partners, and the model of 3+2 universities has posed no problems that I can see.
- *The seminars:* all three seminars were highly relevant. The pandemic has of course affected the project adversely: the discussions about Learning Spaces at the Uppsala seminar, especially, would have profited from an IRL-event. In addition, I find that the gap of almost one year between the Tartu and Uppsala seminars was unfortunate, and in general, I believe that a similar project in the future would gain from having any seminars closer in time to each other. Discussions in Zoom (alas, I could not attend the first seminar in Tartu) have been rewarding, the quality of the contributions and submitted assignments generally good, and lots of ideas have been exchanged: I believe that we all have profited, in various ways, from our three seminars. As can be seen from the summaries from the seminars, there was a certain overlap, especially between the Uppsala and Aarhus seminars, but quite legitimate. A number of participants followed all three seminars, while others only attended one or two. With the drawn-out time scale of the project, that posed no problem, but I believe it would be interesting to have a more consistent list of participants in a project like this, provided that the intervals between meetings are shorter. In that way, it might more readily nurture more long-lasting contacts and exchanges between the participants.
- *Future developments:* many of the observations made during the project are, of course, familiar, but with some elaborations, and with additions of relevant research, I believe that parts of the materials and experiences collected during the project, could be developed into modules of, e.g., an OER resource for professional development. It might also be rewarding to re-assemble the participants for an online event in a year or so, to follow up on the project's effects.

Jens Bennedsen, the main organizer of the seminar in Aarhus (Aarhus University)



Focusing on the continuous development of excellent and innovative teaching practices is essential. In a Danish context, the rules for university employment just recently have been updated. One of the updates was an even more explicit focus on the two equally important tasks for a university employed: research and teaching.

Having a pandemic makes us all aware of the benefits of physical teaching; we can more easily express ourselves (e.g. using body language), build up essential relations with the students, do experiments etc. However, moving this to an online setting was not easy – but it also gave new possibilities and ways that teaching, and learning can occur. We need to use the precious time together for the true purpose – dialogue, discussions, peer learning, help etc. In general, teaching activities require dialogue, not monologue.

The first seminar focused on online and blended learning. It was held before the pandemic as a physical meeting. When I arranged one of my first conferences about online learning (back in 2004), a journalist asked me the obvious question, “Why do you have a physical conference about online learning?” You need to have mutual trust and understanding of the other participants if you should engage in deep discussions and reflections. The Tartu seminar did indeed give new, concrete views and nuances on online and blended learning. Teaching is context-dependent and having participants from different countries gives many good views and practical experiences.

Physical infrastructure plays a vital role in the learning ecosystem. Winston Churchill once said, “We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us” This is indeed also true when it comes to teaching – lecture theatre halls tell the students and us that “real” teaching is a one-way monologue. Seeing concrete examples of innovative rooms at other universities helps me in my role, where I am involved in the renovation of our faculty. The “experimental teaching room” from Uppsala was especially inspiring as well as the rooms from NTNU (R2 and D2). The nice-looking auditorium with fancy sound equipment was also attractive, but it reminds me about the balance between cost and effect; it seems that the usage of the room was not big enough to defend the high cost.

Students centred learning is on the agenda. At Aarhus University, it is most likely becoming part of the accreditation and thus something we need to operationalize. It is a fluffy concept but discussing it with peers in other countries helps to sharpen it. Being the one responsible for the seminar also allowed me to try out new formats in online learning – mural board and court case. Those are concrete teaching tools and methods that I will use in the future.

Ulla Zumente - Steele (Riga Graduate School of Law)



One of the main features of Riga Graduate School of Law (RGSL) is an interdisciplinary teaching approach in most study programmes, and active collaboration across more traditional as well as innovative disciplines such as Law and Technology, Law and Diplomacy, or Law and Finance and other. Certain gradual steps of experimentation with teaching and learning formats in the previous years was rapidly accelerated by the worldwide pandemic and the online work and study reality.

During the series of Nordplus InnovaEDU project seminars we at RGSL clearly realized how challenging for our institution would be the implementation of blended and hybrid teaching models, as opposed to strictly 'online', or purely 'in-class'. The latter ones seem to be much easier to manage and control, if looking from the administrative perspective. 'Blended' and 'hybrid' formats present many more uncertainties and challenges, as they require not only some classroom re-configuration to set up necessary technical equipment, or a different scheduling approach, but also significant academic teaching assistance to make the learning process of great quality and engaging as well as inclusive (so that everyone can join and fully participate regardless of location). The teacher has a hard task to be vigilant and to multi-task and multi-sensor many more aspects, spaces and student perceptions.

RGSL participants benefited from the small-group discussions bringing diverse experiences across academic fields, and practical tips shared by the participants from the other four partner universities. The seminars on learning spaces and student-centered learning triggered review of our study environment. Institution's rather limited physical space can still be re-visited and modernized to embody the concept of student-friendly and student-centered learning spaces. Simpler examples of student self-study rooms, or small computer lab rooms – they can be re-shaped from engaging students in planning the room vision to involving teachers in modelling scenarios for its use, and administrative and technical implementation of the actual refurbishment.

It was inspiring to see (albeit only virtually) and to hear the academic colleagues of much larger partner universities describe how they work with students and the spectrum of methods used in those innovative learning spaces. This experience opened our creative minds to be able to view differently potential of other RGSL classrooms and building communal areas, and beyond: could students choose in parts of seminars to stand up instead of sitting in chairs, or to sit on a "balance balls", or how about using courtyard and nearby park to perform "a walking negotiations", a student trio discussion "on the move"?

The project seminar series certainly contributed to RGSL faculty's search for new, creative ideas for assessment methods, also to explore possible place of project-based learning approach in previously only traditionally delivered subjects, peer-learning and peer-evaluation and feedback as a tool to be used in the learning process, the role of regular student self-reflections and guided meta-communication throughout the course, and many others.

Pre-tasks provided us an excellent opportunity to engage RGS students in creating a video on SCL which they enjoyed and felt trusted, recognized and appreciated. One important step towards student-centered learning is to bring the faculty members (including visiting guest lecturers) on board and to provide necessary training and experience sharing which is being planned to take place at the end of the current academic year. The project has facilitated starting a conversation about the SCL value and its visible and invisible manifestations in all institutional angles.

I would like to thank all colleagues for cooperation and for this transformative experience!

Reidar Lyng (Norwegian University of Science and Technology)



For some context: Our university, and Norwegian Higher Education, is in the midst of some major shifts. Over the past decade online formats have become increasingly important to explore, even before the pandemic hit. Just now we are running two very big projects aiming at redesigning the education programs in Science and Engineering (Technology Education for the Future), and in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Also, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education ([NOKUT](#)) has just started a 2-year long evaluation of the National Qualification Framework; the Ministry of Education has set up agencies that finance development projects in higher education; several recurring conferences on learning in higher education have been established; and systems for recognition of pedagogical merits are being introduced nationally. Projects like InnovaEDU are important contributors to this ongoing redesign of higher education.

It was slightly ironic that the first meeting addressed the issues of blended and online learning so shortly before the pandemic forced us all to learn, apply and mis-apply some basic approaches to this very important issue, and to learn on the job. Rarely has a theme become so emphatically relevant for so many so quickly. Those from NTNU who participated in that meeting were among the staff that was extremely helpful in supporting staff that needed to adapt and master quickly last spring.

And while the first seminar was done as planned, the second and third seminar had to be online. This set up some limitations, but also opened up new possibilities. Especially for the second seminar where we were supposed to discuss learning spaces and visit the campus of Uppsala. In retrospect because of the pre-tasks we were given, a clear picture not only of the campus in Uppsala, but also of the learning spaces in Riga, Århus and Tartu emerged. The online format provided “a new learning space” where we could share and where we also had to find new ways of learning from each other. Clearly a combination of the physical and the online formats has the potential of improving the outcomes from meetings such as the ones we have had. This is something that we should take advantage of when it comes to offering our students an opportunity to collaborate with students from other universities.

The topic of innovative learning spaces is important to us: some of the barriers to a more student active approach to contextual learning can probably be traced to the designs of auditoriums with its focus on one presenter in front of the students, as they need to construct meaning from lectures. If the culture is set in the walls, as the saying goes, what happens when we redesign the learning spaces?

Finally, for the meeting in Aarhus it was inspiring to experience a wide range of interactive tools and designs over two days. The theme was also a well-chosen finish to the project. It is inspiring to discuss these matters with colleagues from other universities. As has been pointed out by others, the concepts we have discussed are elusive, and not always easy to define, but discussion with peers are extremely helpful in constructing the necessary understanding of them. What works for students, works also for us.

The design for the online meetings, with preparatory tasks, intense well-designed workshops and group discussions is worth replicating in other contexts. Overall, the experience of being a part of the InnovaEDU project has been rewarding, and we would like to continue keeping the contacts going in this network.

Conclusions and future implication

The following report was developed with the aim to shed light on the rationale and implementation process of InnovaEDU network's project, entitled "Learn to Te(a)ch seminar series". The report shared useful insights on conceptual and practical implementation of seminar series for those who are involved in similar projects or would like to write and implement the following format of seminars in the future.

The coordinators of the network believe that the global pandemic only re-emphasized the relevance of the scope and nature of the project, which is linked to the rapid speed of digitalization and diffusion of innovative teaching practices in curricula activities of HEIs.

The testimonials of the coordinators point to the successful collaboration between the partners: the overall management of the project ran smoothly throughout the duration of the project despite the presented external difficulties imposed by the travel restrictions. The report highlighted in a detailed way how the program of the seminars could be successfully re-adjusted to an online setting and highlighted benefits which could be linked to the following format. The coordinators of the network believe that the following seminar series helped to strengthen and consolidate further the connections between participants of the seminar series (teaching staff, educational developers and administrative staff) by creating networking possibilities and spin-off ideas for collaboration.

The collected feedback from the seminar participants shows added value of such trainings in the form of creating possibilities for the exchange of good teaching practices; learning about concrete case studies and examples of course implementation with innovative teaching practices and opportunities for self-reflection and feedback from the community of peers. Moreover, the development of such tangible outcomes as [Moodle page of InnovaEDU](#) and [OpenScholar website of InnovaEDU network](#) create additional opportunities for further diffusion of innovative teaching methods in a long term-perspective by creating mediums of storing relevant didactic material from the seminars and summaries of good teaching practices, available in the national language of the partners of the network, which ensures more smooth integration and dissemination of such practices in the partner universities and broader teaching community in the region.

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Appendix 1

NB! The following summary of good teaching practices from Tartu seminar is the English version of the document. The translated documents (available in Danish, Estonian, Latvian, Norwegian and Swedish) are available on InnovaEDU's website - <https://innovaedu.ut.ee/summaries-good-teaching-practices>

InnovaEDU network
Learn to Tea(ch) series

Tartu seminar: "Designing and delivering courses in an online and blended environment: tools, methods, processes and challenges"

Summary of good teaching practices

Introduction

The following summary of good teaching practices has been collected as a result of group brainstorming activity during the seminar program. It includes recommendations from the teaching and administrative/support staff members from partner institutions (University of Tartu/J. Skytte Institute of Political Studies; Riga Graduate School of Law; Uppsala University; Aarhus University and Norwegian University of Science and Technology). The main focus of the seminar centered around challenges and opportunities of planning and implementing online and blended courses in various degree programs. The central issues and recommendations of addressing them could be formulated as follows:

Developing peer-to-peer interaction and peer-review activities in an online environment

To facilitate activities that promote peer-to-peer learning in an online environment, it is important to:

- **Set a clear framework and process for peer evaluation in an online environment by finding an appropriate online tool to match your objectives.** Consult with your instructional designer on the most feasible online tool, which is supported by your university's Learning Management System (LMS), helping you to technically and didactically setup and implement a peer-review process.
- **Set "ground-rules" for online evaluation. Provide clear and concise information to students on the code of conduct for online peer assessment.** Students should have a precise understanding of the purpose of and expectations from such activity.
- **Create support material to guide students' peer evaluation.** Develop additional assessment rubrics or visual tools in your Learning Management System, which could assist students in providing feedback to their peers. The following rubrics could contain more detailed and expanded information on what constitutes sufficient feedback.
- **Monitor online progress of students and intervene when necessary.** To ensure that all students get the most from online peer evaluation exercises, it is crucial to ensure that they follow the set rules, and no one is experiencing any technical issues with completing or following up on the assignment. In this respect, it is important to constantly monitor the progress of students through the Learning Management system and include reflective and feedback mechanisms for students, enabling them to consult with the lecturer or seek help when necessary.

Enhancing interactivity in webinars

To encourage more live interaction during webinars it is important to:

- **Create an open and “welcoming” environment for your webinars.** The first step in encouraging interactivity in your webinars is to make sure that students feel comfortable in an online setting. To ensure that, provide students with helpful information prior to the webinar about the overall setting of the session: how they can pose questions and interact with each other and the instructor.
- **Try to divide your webinar into relatively short sessions to make sure that students don’t lose focus throughout the entire webinar.** Try to plan your class by laying out different activities for respective parts of your webinar. The activities can vary from individual to group tasks, from a short poll to a breakout-room, but try to keep them consistent and in line with your planned class objectives. It is important that your questions and tasks remain meaningful – the tool shouldn’t be more important than the content.
- **Develop various triggers throughout the session.** One of the effective ways of engaging students during the session could be brief questions/triggers in the form of a poll or interactive survey, which can quickly re-engage a student; give them an opportunity to self-test their knowledge and give a lecturer an overview of students’ progress and comprehension of material.
- **Assign (a student) moderator for a webinar:** it might be good to have an additional moderator for your webinar, who will keep an eye on online chat and assist the instructor with engaging with the online chat questions.

Designing video content for lectures

To prepare video content well-fitted for online learning, it is important to:

- **Consider technical setup for video recording.** It is important to bear in mind that a good audio, light and camera angle play a significant role on how the recording will turn out. It is recommended to test the potential setting for a video prior to making a recording.
- **Prepare your script or talking points.** Try to prepare some talking points, a script, and/or slides prior to recording - it will help you to stay focused and on point while recording.
- **Think of the duration and structure of your lecture.** Think about the most effective ways of conveying information to the students and which video format might fulfill this purpose in the most feasible way (e.g. explainer video; talking head; interview; screen-capture). If your lecture is longer than 20 minutes, think about dividing it into smaller parts and adding tabs to the structure of your lecture so it is a) easier for students to find information and b) easier for you in a long-term to update specific section of the video with a more updated information if new research or data comes out on the discussed topic.

Appendix 2

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InnovaEDU network
Learn to Tea(ch) series

Uppsala seminar: "Navigating Learning Spaces" Uppsala, 16-17th September, 2020

Summary of good teaching practices

Introduction

An overarching goal of the seminar was to affirm the choice and design of learning spaces as the result of *pedagogical* considerations. We also wished to emphasise the importance of paying serious attention to, and care for, those learning spaces where students work independently, without any teacher presence. Finally, the seminar aimed at providing concrete advice for carrying out different types of TLAs (teaching and learning activities) in various types of physical settings, and for the development of new learning spaces.

The ongoing pandemic left a clear imprint on the actual seminar. Apart from the fact that it had to be conducted online, instead of in Uppsala, the challenges presented by hybrid teaching, where some students are present in a physical room while others participate online, figured prominently in the discussions, and were also discussed at the Aarhus meeting.

During the small group discussions, participants exchanged ideas and suggestions for handling and overcoming challenges that they had faced in their teaching practice. From the general discussions, the following general themes emerged as particularly salient.

Flexible spaces for learning

Students gain from engaging in activities that require them to apply previously acquired knowledge in order to solve problems and analyse complex contexts. In the process, they also need to locate and evaluate relevant materials and research and should be given the opportunity to share the results of their work and receive feedback from peers and teachers. In order to allow teachers from many different disciplines to design a wide variety of such activities, ***flexibility***, and not technology *per se*, is the key thing for new learning spaces.

- **Flexible space:** teachers and students should be able to re-configure their learning spaces. Rooms should have moveable furniture, allowing students to group and re-group easily during the span of a learning activity. Flexibility extends to other aspects of the room, too: walls could be used as whiteboards, power outlets should be everywhere, microphones and speakers should permit easy communication etc.
- **Flexible technology:** there will always be rooms with very specific technology for very specific purposes, and rooms with very little in the way of technology, but flexible learning spaces should open up for many more different scenarios: they should lend themselves to BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) scenarios, where student laptops and mobiles carry the work forward, but should also provide technology that support the joint creation and presentation

of the results of group work. Generic technology, that is open to many different uses in many different contexts, is generally to be preferred over more narrow solutions.

- **Flexible access:** *teachers* should be able to include room flexibility as one factor when they book rooms for a course, and not only the number of seats and basic technology. *Students* need generous access to group rooms and well-designed spaces for individual and collective work and should not be met by locked doors and an uninviting study environment.

Getting the teachers on board

Many advanced learning spaces find themselves empty, and their technology is all too often severely under-used. How can we lower the threshold?

- **Promoting the added worth:** teachers need to know why they should bring their students to a particular room and try out new ways of teaching. The best way is to have them talk to other teachers, and to have them listen to student voices from other courses.
- **Technical support** that is quickly available, efficient and patient.
- **Pedagogical support** that grows out of a dialogue with the teachers and a real interest in their teaching, and which helps them to integrate experimental teaching in their courses
- **Institutional support** that recognizes and values pedagogical innovation

Getting the students on board

It has often been observed that many students tend to look with some suspicion on innovative ways of teaching. Some teachers may meet with expressions of discontent and resistance from students that still see the old-fashioned lecture as the “real” form of teaching. How can we bring them along?

- **Communicate and explain your plan:** as a teacher, you should have a good idea why you have chosen to teach in a certain way on a certain occasion. There is no need to keep this a secret: share it with the students!
- **Make it worthwhile:** if you raise the expectations of students by bringing them to new spaces and by giving them access to resources and tools that are quite new to them, their tasks should really require them to use them. Otherwise, it may appear as technological overkill.
- **Give the students control:** it is much more important that the students use the technology, than that the teachers use it.
- **Provide appropriate scaffolding:** any activities should be well integrated in the course structure and be aligned with other activities.
- **Evaluate and collaborate** evaluate what has been done – and consider planning it together with the students!

Developing new learning spaces

All too often, new and expensive learning spaces and technology seem to give a poor return on investment. They may fail for different reasons, but problems can often be traced back to the planning process.

- **Include all stakeholders from the outset:** teachers and departments, property management, local support staff, students. All should be involved in the project.
- **Establish standard solutions:** unavoidably, there will be a variety of technical solutions, but it is a good idea to strive for some degree of standardization. Teachers, as well as students will, e.g., be pleased to recognize a standard set of controls in different rooms; support staff can

provide better support when they have fewer systems and solutions to care for; fewer systems are likely to be easier and less expensive to buy, update and replace.

Appendix 3

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InnovaEDU network
Learn to Tea(ch) series

Aarhus seminar: "Student-Centered Learning."

Summary of good (teaching) practices

Introduction

The following summary of good practices has been collected due to group activities during the seminar program. It includes recommendations from the teaching and administrative/support staff members from partner institutions (University of Tartu/J. Skytte Institute of Political Studies; Riga Graduate School of Law; Uppsala University; Aarhus University and Norwegian University of Science and Technology). The seminar's primary focus centred around understanding, challenges, and opportunities of student-centered learning, what it is, how it is different from "normal good teaching", and how teachers and administrative staff foster more student-centred learning. The central issues and recommendations from the seminar could be formulated as follows:

Understanding Student-centered learning

To facilitate activities that promote student-centred learning, it is naturally essential to understand the concept; it is essential to:

- **Student-centred learning is not just ONE thing.** Student-centred learning can have many different focuses, but it is typically seen as an umbrella concept, focusing on students taking a more decisive role in their learning path. As noted by the European student union, student-centred learning does not have a "One-Size-Fits-All" Solution.



- **Collaboration.** Student-centred learning requires collaboration between teachers and students. Students should not just be seen as a "burden" but as junior engineers, junior lawyers, junior sociologists, junior ... who can be active and have their views and voices.

Concrete ways to "do" student-centred learning

- **Making lectures interactive:** Lecturing is still a very dominant teaching method at the university level. By making them more interactive, the students can have a saying in what is being taught.
- **Different student knowledge and background:** Adapting to student knowledge & background by, e.g. with mixed groups discussions, tests to establish a baseline, different sets of exercises.
- **Expectations:** The teachers and students must have shared expectations about their role. Teachers should clearly communicate the responsibilities of the students in the beginning and regularly follow up on the status of the shared expectations.
- **Make the structure fit:** In some universities, it is, i.e. required that the entire content has to be public already long before the course starts. This makes the content and form of a given course very static and thus not very suited for students' control over their learning.
- **Flexible content:** Having the students vote on the inclusion of certain topics into the course
- **Case studies:** Case studies are beneficial when students come from different backgrounds with different experiences, which we need to leverage. One case scenario with guiding questions can help students discuss the case based on their setting and their experience - what would work/not work in that setting? It becomes easier for them to see straight away that there may be different solutions to address the same problem and no single correct answer.
- **Flipped learning:** Record a short lecture on the topic and give students 2-3 supporting documents with the details. Students are asked to listen to the lecture, read the papers and prepare 1-2 questions each which they ask the teacher during a 1,5-2-hour zoom/live session.

Facilities that support student-centred learning

- **Make rooms that invite collaboration:** Old-fashioned lecture halls encourage old-fashioned lectures: they do not invite activity, group discussions, movement in the room, student participation.
- **Elements in the room:** Furniture is more important than technology. Have tables that invite discussion, collaboration (no square tables).
- **Accessibility:** Make rooms available 24/7 and ensure that it is easy to see if the room is not occupied.
- **Multifunctionality:** Make rooms that can – in a short time – be reconfigured to fit the learning situation.
- **Learning takes place in many contexts:** Make learning spaces that support both learning activities that are initiated by the teacher and where the teacher is present, as well as spaces where the students initiate the learning without teachers present.
- **In hybrid teaching format:** make sure that those who are not present are not left behind (e.g. if a lecturer asks a question - start with an online student).