Author's accepted manuscript (postprint)

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Abstract: To facilitate change in the way teaching is delivered is challenging. Change is painful and demanding, as we all know. But change we must. Government whitepapers plans a shift in how students in higher education are taught, from teacher-centered to student-centered teaching. Educators in higher education are often fastened in their way of delivering teaching, which is based on their own experiences as students over many years and their lack of pedagogical and methodical competences.

Our challenge as a support team for the educators, who are in need of elevating their competences regarding teaching both online and face-to-face, is to find means of helping them in their change and broadening their knowledgebase regarding teaching.

This paper describes how change can be led by role modelling, practice, and reflection upon one's own practice through participating in a 50-hours online course regarding digital pedagogy and methodology.

Short introduction

In this paper we will present our experiences with developing and running a 50-hour online course regarding digital pedagogy and methodology called DigiPed, which is offered to academic staff at Nord University. As members of the support team, Centre of competence in Learning and Technology (KOLT), with the mandate of helping and advising educators at our university, we need to be aware of policies and research regarding teaching quality and how students best thrive and learn. These considerations and the fact that many educators lack pedagogical and methodical competences have been important to consider in our quest for change in how teaching is delivered.

Why the need for DigiPed?

In recent years, the Norwegian Government has issued several whitepapers regarding quality in education. In the whitepaper "Culture for Quality in Higher Education", they state:

> *"Learning is a subjective process that occurs through activity and reflection in the meeting space between student and teacher; it is not about students passively receiving information. Various forms of active learning and participation in research activities have been shown to give good results. Students should, furthermore, receive feedback and evaluations that give them clear guidance for self-improvement. Technological tools can assist in delivering student learning and feedback that are as customised as possible, even where students are in a large group. Education should be based on knowledge on how students learn most effectively and should be constantly evolving."* (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016, p. 13)

This statement correlates with the fact that student diversity has increased in line with the raise of the number of students that enrol in higher education. 37,8% of all 19-24 year old Norwegians were enrolled in higher education in 2020 (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2021). Only in the last decade the number of students has risen by 27%. Biggs and Tang (2011) talk about how to handle the student diversity by aligning the learning outcomes with the assessment and the learning activity and thus teach according to the theory of constructive alignment. A consequence of constructive alignment is that the role of the teacher must change, from focusing on what the teacher does to how students learn best. Hakim (2015, p. 12) concludes: *"Personal competence of teachers has been shown*

to have significantly the contribution in improving the control capability of teaching materials, the ability to manage learning and a commitment to doing a good job (learning performance).

When teachers were asked about their educational education, the survey "The National Teacher Survey" (Lid et al., 2018) revealed that the largest group (46%) has university and university-college pedagogical basic skills, 17% have practical pedagogical education, 9% have teacher education and 14% stated that they have different educational education. 27% have stated that they do not have any formal educational qualifications. (Educators could tick more than one box, hence the number adds up to more than 100%.) The pedagogical basic skills are gained by taking a 200-hour course in university pedagogy which normally gives 10-15 ECTS. When nearly 50% of the teachers potentially only have basic pedagogical skills, will it affect the way they read and understand research regarding how students learn and how to translate this into ways of changing their teaching methodology?

The Student Survey (NOKUT, 2020) states that only 50% of the students believe that the teaching is designed for the students to participate actively. Sekkingstad and Fossøy (2018) have found that teachers may find it challenging to facilitate students' learning. The students' learning processes seem to fall more into the background, while the teachers emphasize their own role as communicators and the lecture as the natural form of teaching. Willcoxson (1998) found in her research that lectors base their own teaching from inspiring teachers as one of the key factors when they conduct their teaching, and that they may feel powerless to change from a lecture-based. Hence, they general depend upon their own experience as a basis for their teaching. Willcoxson (1998) also states that reflective practice is needed, rather than limited workshops with a timeframe of a few hours to create a different way of teaching. Amundsen and Fretland Øygarden (2019) have found that educators report that the relationship between themselves and their students have changed over the last 10-15 years. Students perceive themselves as "clients" and are much more demanding than they used to be. They want to be served and entertained, rather than doing an effort to learn. The educators find this as both a good and a bad change, hence they need to sharpen their game, but also as something that steals time from planning and changing their way of teaching.

Amundsen and Haakstad (2017), Czerniawski et al. (2017) and Lindgaard (2019a) find that the educators feel a type of cross pressure between developing their teaching and other responsibilities such as administration, guiding students and research, and the feeling of lack of time to do it all, is essential. When asking teacher educators about their priority when it comes to their professional development, how to become better researchers is their priority. They seem to live up to national and institutional expectations where there are publications that matter both in terms of employment and promotion. This probably means that less attention is paid to the teaching part of the job (Ulvik & Smith, 2018). According to Barkhuizen (2021) academic staff at universities may also experience identity dilemmas when it comes to what kind of research it is acceptable to spend time on. It may seem that doing institutional research give higher status than action-based research, e.g. on their own teaching. These types of dilemmas can be counterproductive when it comes to the government's goal of changing the way teaching is delivered. After the beforementioned Whitepaper "Quality Culture in Higher Education" Meld. St.16 (2016-2017), the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HKdir) and NOKUT (the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) have launched incentive schemes, like research grants, to invite educators to research the effect of change in the way teaching is delivered or developing projects for new teaching/learning designs used in higher education. The government has also introduced a merit scheme to reduce the gap in the status between research and teaching, and as a call to explore and develop one's own teaching.

For years our team had been on the side-line of the procedures that allowed the academic staff to raise their competences, for instance the 200-hour course in university pedagogy. Even though we had a clear mandate to help and advice the academic staff, we were only "allowed" to or invited to hold webinars, demonstrations or training around the use of ICT in education. This changed with a new insertion of law regulating terms of employment in higher education in 2019. In §1.1 of Regulations concerning appointment and promotion to teaching and research posts that there is a demand that all educational institutions shall develop more detailed criteria for employees' educational professional competence and how this is to be documented. (Forskrift om ansettelse og opprykk, 2006) Hence the need for courses where the academic staff could document that their competences rose, and we were able to develop new courses and become an active partner in for instance the 200-hour basic course and other courses and development work. The COVID-19 pandemic brought the lack of digital literacy and digital pedagogical competence further into focus.

The thinking behind the creation and the realization of DigiPed

The development of the 50-hour course about digital pedagogy and methodology, has been done with the use of conversational framework (Laurillard, 2012) and based upon constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011). We established a set of learning outcomes, and those became decisive for both the content and the different activities the participates are enforced to take part in during the run of the course. Another concept that affected the choices we made when we developed the course, was a notion about a lack of a good role model for the academic staff when they plan their own teaching. It is hard for people who have spent years of their life in one system, and that have succeeded and prospered in that system, to find other ways to deliver teaching than the way they have experienced it themselves. Rod Berger (2017) gave a nice allegory to this when he quoted the character Ellis Boyd Redding in the film *The Shawshank Redemption* who said, "*I'm an institutionalized man, now*". Opdal (2018) indicates that the lack of change of focus towards learning instead of teaching might be caused by not being familiar with what student-active learning methods entail.

In previous development work with academic staff, a lack of common language was an obstacle that made cooperation harder than necessary (Lindgaard, 2019b), hence the need for some content to introduce the most used learning theories in order to give us a more common language. The other themes were worked out during a brainstorming session with the whole team followed by a selection process. We ended up with these themes: (1) learning theories, (2) online socialization and building relations, (3) student activation (synchronous and asynchronous), (4) planning of online teaching, (5) different learning activities in online teaching, (6) smart use of Canvas (LMS), (7) how to use video and podcast, (8) assessment, feedback and evaluation, and (9) the learning journey: Personal and in a historical perspective.

DigiPed is a mix of asynchronous content and activities in our LMS and synchronous sessions/lessons. During the run of the course there are 7 synchronous sessions. To introduce the participants to the learning environment, we have leaned on the 5-stage model of Gilly Salmon (2013). A lot of effort has been put into the welcoming and start of the course. E.g. every participant has gotten an email before the opening of the asynchronous content in the LMS with a welcoming text and clarification of expectations from the course leader. They were asked to present themselves in a forum discussion, using preferably a recorded video and if that was not possible, a written contribution. All participants got a written comment on something they shared in their contribution and a comment welcoming them to the course. Another asynchronous activity they had to do before we met, was to contribute to a second forum discussion writing about their experiences with online teaching. They were also asked to comment on two fellow participant's contributions.

The content in the first few modules have been set with requirements and prerequisites as a way of leading the participants in a steered learning path. The participants are expected to meet prepared for all the synchronous sessions, and those who have not met the requirements, have been contacted via the LMS a few days before the session in order to give them a possibility to meet prepared. During the synchronous session, the participants use theories and concepts they have read about in the asynchronous content through discussions in smaller groups. Our goal is that at least 50% of the time in these sessions should go towards student activity. To prepare the participants for small group activities in break-out rooms, we used icebreaker activities during the first synchronous session - sharing something on a common online wall, writing in the chat in Zoom, unmuting their microphone and stating e.g. what they had for breakfast (hence we get to test if camera and microphone are working before sending them in a breakout-room). In every synchronous session, we try to emphasise the importance of the social aspect of learning, hence we create opportunities for the participants to get to know each other and build relationships mainly by facilitating the opportunity to discuss with each other in smaller groups. After the first run of the course, we increased the amount of time we used on each discussion, realising that good and fruitful discussions needed more than 5 minutes. As a rule, based on the feedback from the participants, we find that 15-20 minutes are appropriate for a small group of 3-4 to be able to get some depth in their discussions.

After each session, the participants must produce a work of reflection based upon their preparatory work and what they have been experiencing during the session. Dewey (1934/2008) based his pragmatism on human qualitative experience, which considered any existing phenomena to be an event. Developing DigiPed, we wanted to ensure that the participants gained learning experience by reflection on earlier experiences and be able to gain new once which they also could reflect upon. Kolb and Kolb (2005); (Kolb, 2015) talk about making space for learning using

concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, as visualised in figure 1. During the run of the course, each participant work on his/her own teaching project, as visualized in figure 2.
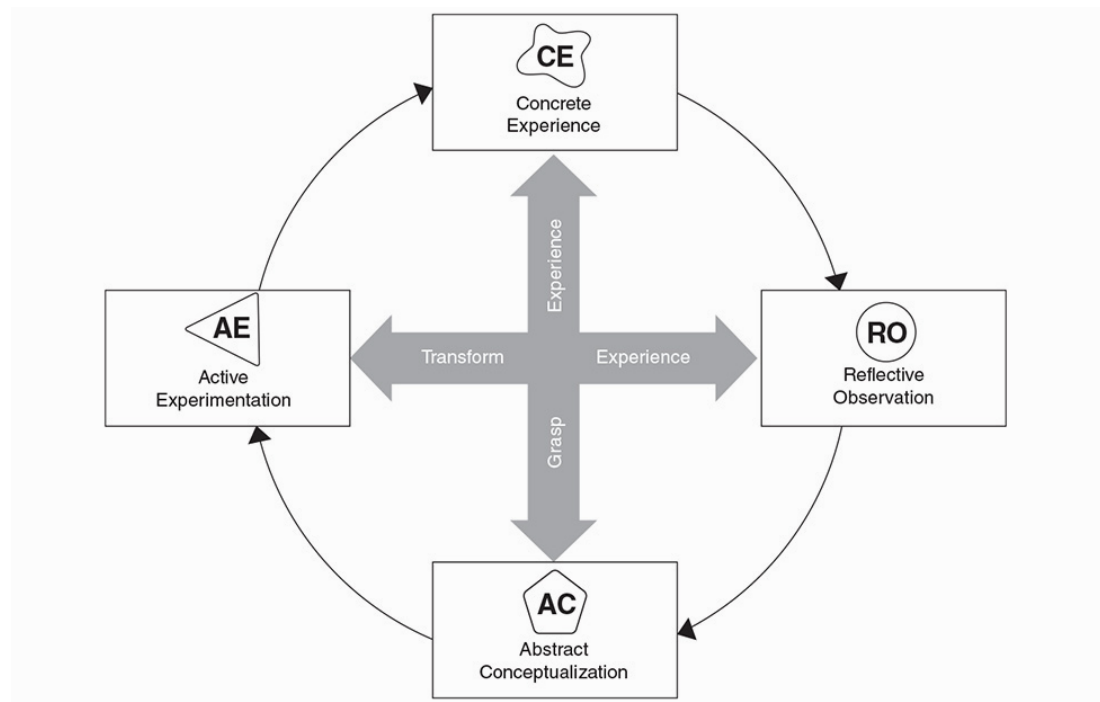

Figure 1 Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, as found in Kolb (2015)

They will then use what they experience and learn (Concrete Experience) during the DigiPed course to model their own teaching. In addition to their own teaching, they will also observe a colleague's teaching session and give feedback to him/her (Reflective Observation).
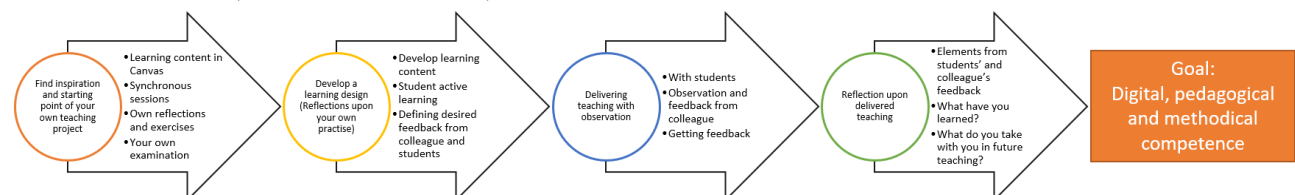

Figure 2 Teaching project during DigiPed

During the run of the course, the participants are obliged to hand-in two written assignments. The first one is about planning their own teaching (Abstract Conceptualisation), the second one is about reflecting about their own given teaching (Active Experimentation) and the feedback they got from their peer and their students. They receive feedback on both assignments from us, where we try to focus on potential for growth and development in their teaching.

Damsgaard (2019) emphasises the need students have for structure, mastery, activity, and relations to give them quality and fulfilment in their student life, including their learning process. Through the development and execution of DigiPed, we have tried to achieve a good and clear structure, give the participants a sense of mastery, offer a lot of different activities where they can process their new skills and knowledge and facilitate good relations to both fellow participants and course leaders, in order to give them a model to learn from and last, but not least, a good and positive experience. When Damsgaard (2019) writes about mastery, she emphasizes the importance of acknowledging that much of the motivation lies in pursuing what one is most interested in, and what can open for new ways of thinking. The older the learner is, Illeris (2012) says, the learner will be more likely to choose what

he/she wants to learn based on the relevance of what is presented. If the learner finds something irrelevant, he/she will not spend time and effort trying to learn it even if the teacher might present it as important. Our participants are adults, with limited amount of time to spend on the course. Hence the main project during the course is based upon their own teaching, trying to make sure they will feel relevance and motivation towards the project.

What does the participants say?

"This course should be mandatory for everyone!"
- participant in the DigiPed course

We have asked for evaluations from the participants, both during and after the end of the course. The feedback has been predominantly very positive, and they have stated that they will take with them a lot of different elements when planning and delivering their own teaching online or face-to-face. It seems that our effort to create a good learning environment both asynchronous and synchronous has resonated well with the participates in the course. We have emphasized the importance of being visible as an educator and helping the students build relationships, not only when preparing the "learning grounds", but throughout the course, as recommended by Lemov (2020); Salmon (2013). In both synchronous dialogues and in their written work, the participants acknowledge that most of them haven't done enough towards this when teaching either in classroom or online. And that they, moving forward, will focus more on creating good relationships student vs student and student vs educator.

One of the participants states: *"For me, who is completely new to the subject (digital pedagogy), each lesson is a step towards my goal of becoming a better teacher, getting more ideas and tools to involve the students".* As mentioned before, we want the course to provide an example for the participants on how one can build an online course/subject using the tools that are available for our academic staff at Nord University. *"The literature we read before the online sessions was also useful, and I find that the course DigiPed is theory-based by clearly using elements from the literature in practice"*, another participant states. A third participant says: "*These are useful and important online lessons. The themes are relevant. It provides inspiration for developing your own teaching and seeing opportunities, on an individual level. At the same time, it is nice with group work where we discuss and learn from each other. It is also good that the course and the group work are across faculties*". The latter one points to the positive effect working across faculties can give. It enables the participants to discuss the subject matter without tumbling down the road of the details of one's own subject didactics. Instead, they can discuss pedagogy and didactics on a general level, learning from their peers.

The participants express that it's useful to experience how it is to be an online student. One participant responded with this after being made aware that he/she was late with an assignment: "*It's delayed…I will do better! Now I really feel like a pupil/student* 😊". More than once, we have gotten feedback on e.g. the amount of time one actually need to set aside in a synchronous online discussion. The participants are used to breaking up a lecture with 2-minute-long discussions among the students, typically with the person sitting next to each other in the classroom/lecture hall. Those type of activities transform poorly into the online environment, and it has been important for us to make sure those breakout-room discussions gets a time limit that actually allows the participants to get something out of the discussions.

Several emphasize how satisfied they are with the short distance between theory and pracice in the course, which might confirm that we have made a good call when it comes to the main project during this course. One feedback we got was: "(the course) *Created the desire and courage to dare to try out new tools in learning activities that are imminent!*".

DigiPed forward

We have worked in an agile manner when developing and during the delivering of the course, with reflections after each session and with continuous development of the content and planned activities based upon feedback and our own reflections. We have made changes for each iteration of the course. Hence the course will never be completely Done. There are always room for improvements.

In the coming spring, we are planning a research project to find out if there has been any short- or long-term changes in the former participants' teaching after completing the DigiPed-course.

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Figure 2 Teaching project during DigiPed