



DigiTeaL

DigiTeal – Digital Teaching Literacy

IO1.A2 – NATIONAL REPORT

Developed by:

University of Bucharest, Romania



INFORMATION ABOUT OUTPUT

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Activity: IO1-A2 : National Report

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1. General Introduction

On 11th March 2020, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director of the World Health Organization made an announcement never heard before in the history of the organization and of the world – the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, worldwide a series of measures to prevent the spread of the COVID 19 virus were taken, including long term quarantine, limitation of travel, working from home, and the shift to online teaching. In this context, teachers were put in a delicate position that required them to transfer their teaching online in a record time and with little or no preparation.

The DigiTeaL project brings together five partner countries (United Kingdom, Cyprus, Greece, Germany and Romania) that work together to: 1) pinpoint the needs and problems faced by teachers while teaching online; 2) create practical, applied resources for the use of teachers, using best practices; 3) offer teachers information about the non-technical classroom management of online teaching and solutions to problems that might occur during online classes; and 4) inform teachers about an internationally recognized online assessment system that can be adapted for students regardless of the subject that is being taught.

This report was developed as part of the DigiTeaL project and reflects the level of digital literacy of Romanian teachers 2 years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This report is structured in 4 sections, followed by a conclusion and bibliography. The first section provides a snapshot of digital initiatives adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic and explores the current state of online teaching in Romania, the second section explains the methodological approach and data collection process, section 3 provides an analysis of the data collected in Romania and section 4 summarizes good practices related to online teaching.

2. State of the Art regarding Online Teaching

According to data published by EUROSTAT (2020a), the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic impacted 15.7 million children (up to 5 years of age) in early childhood education, 24.5 million pupils (5-7 years old) enrolled in primary education, 36 million students (10-16 years old) in secondary education. In total, around 76.2 million European pupils and students are thought to have been affected by the sudden closure of schools and shift to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Romania, at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, there were 2.8 million pupils and 215.289 teachers according to the Minister of Education (Ofițeru, 2019). The needs and challenges that emerged in the context of moving the teaching from the physical classroom to the online classroom can be put in two main categories: challenges faced by teachers and challenges faced by pupils, each category having two dimensions – logistical and digital literacy. The logistical dimension refers to problems like the lack of internet access. According to the National Council for Students 800 000 pupils didn't have access to internet during the COVID-19 pandemic (Nistor, 2020). It was also estimated by the Romanian Minister of Education that over 4.400 teachers didn't have a digital device and/or access to the internet (2021). In addition, the lack of digital devices that enable access to online classes, the lack of privacy during online classes, as pupils had to share rooms with their parents and/or siblings and teachers with their children or other members of the family; and the lack of a national platform for e-learning were the most significant challenges that teachers and pupils were faced with. Although the National Law of Education no.1/2011 proposed the construction of two national platforms for online education – The Virtual School Library and The School Platform for E-learning, these are yet to be established. The abovementioned challenged were coupled with the dimension 'digital literacy' that includes problems like a very low level of digital knowledge, lack of experience and training in using digital devices or online platforms, the lack of information and solutions in managing the technical and non-technical problems associated with online teaching.

From the start of the pandemic the Romanian authorities have made steps in order to reduce the problems encounter by teachers during the move to online teaching. In 2020 the Law 109/2020 was adopted as complementary to the National Law of Education no.1/2011 through which The Romanian Minister of Education promised to offer access to the digital infrastructure to any teacher and pupil that required this. Also, in the summer of 2021, the Romanian Government assumed responsibility for implementing a project proposed by the Romanian Presidency – the project is called Educated Romania and its main aim is to improve the level of teachers' digital literacy by 2030.

3. Needs and Gaps of Teachers in relation to Online Teaching

In Romania data for this report was collected from August to September 2021 and the results outlining the digital literacy needs and skill gaps of teachers are discussed in this section.

3.1 Questionnaire Results

1. Number and background of the respondents

In Romania the questionnaire was distributed online through specialized teachers' networks, mainly Facebook and WhatsApp groups. Data collection started on 27th of July and lasted until 13th of September 2021. During this time, 164 responses were collected from Romanian teachers. The demographic characteristics of the participants can be found in the table below:

Sample characteristics	Percentage (N = 164)
Gender	
Female	94.1%
Male	5.9%
Teaching Level	
Pre-school	5.9%
Primary	20.6%
Gymnasium	33.5%
High school	17.6%
Vocational high school	13.5%
other	9.1%

2. Presentation of Digital Skills Results

Most of the respondents rate their digital competences as good to high, 46.5% declaring being on a 4 from a 5 Likert scale points. The main difficulties faced online were poor internet connection (71.2%), the lack of specialized software and apps (45.3%) or adequate equipment to deliver online teaching (38.8%). About 35.5% respondents considered the lack of digital knowledge an issue.

Regarding the digital platforms used at an institutional level in Romania the diversity is huge, but Google Classroom and G suite for education are the most often mentioned. The table below offers more information:

Platforms / apps used for online teaching	Percentage
Google Meet	79.4%
Zoom	67.6%
Online whiteboards	61.2%
Online quizzes	55.3%
Padlet	40%
Canva	42.9%
No app for enhance the interaction with learners	12.9%
No app for creating engaging content for online teaching	26.5%

Also, the Open Badges System is not too popular in Romania, only 4% of the respondents are using it, 13.5% heard about it, and 82.4% had never heard about it.

3. Presentation of Managing Online Learners Results

The respondents were confronted with a decreasing level of students motivation (61.2%), digital fatigue (67.7%) and errors with students evaluation; 45.9% of respondents declared that the grades awarded to students were higher because examination was done online.

4. Presentation of Online Safety and Privacy

Most of the respondents were aware of the GDPR regulations (69.4%) and their answers prove that most of them have taken steps to protect students' online. Only approx. 5% of them did not do anything to make sure pupils were safe online.

5. Good Practices Results

Staying in touch with other teacher and sharing good practices was a way to cope with the shift to online teaching. 95% of Romanian teachers valued being part of a teacher community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2 Focus Group Results

The Romanian team organized and led 3 focus-groups, as follows: on September 9th (2 focus groups), on September 10th (one focus group) and on September 11th (one focus group). In total, 18 secondary school teachers took part in these 4 online focus groups.

For the majority of teachers having to adapt to online teaching was a 'suden' or 'unexpected' shift towards the digitalisation of education. Their experience with delivering online teaching during the first lockdown (March-May 2020) and the 2020-2021 academic year is mixed. On one hand, some teachers have seen this period as an opportunity to develop new abilities and

learn new things. On the other, most of our respondent considered that they could not assess the children's achievements in an objective and correct way in an online environment.

Overall, the difficulties identified by Romanian teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic are as follows:

- a. Technical difficulties: lack of adequate technology (laptops, tablets, mobile phones); problems with the internet connection;
- b. Social difficulties: new types of relationships within the 'golden triangle' (teacher-student-parent) and new social roles for pupils and parents.
- c. Personal difficulties: the need to learn new abilities and to develop new skills related to online teaching.

Regarding the difficulties in relation to managing students behaviour in an online classroom as compared to a face-to-face classroom, the teachers indicated the following:

- a. Huge problems related to the individual evaluation of learning performance (e.g. you cannot apply the same system of evaluation as in a face-to-face class) which led to inflated grades and overevaluation of the students located at the bottom and at the middle of the performance ladder.
- b. Problems related to teaching some disciplines like sciences (biology, chemistry, physics) and humanities (philosophy) especially for high-school students.

In addition, Romanian teachers indicated the need to develop the following skills for teaching to continue to be delivered online:

- a. Learning how to use digital tools (especially video apps/programs) in a creative way;
- b. Learning how to use more efficiently the existing online teaching platforms;
- c. Taking part in training courses in order to further refine the social and psychological abilities needed in online interactions with children.

As examples of good practice the teachers that took part in this research made reference to:

- a. Online platforms developed by teams of Romanian teachers, such as 'ASQ' (<https://asq.ro/>);
- b. Training courses for teachers, such as 'CRED' (<https://www.educred.ro/>).

4. Good Practices in relation to Online Teaching

GOOD PRACTICE 1	
Name	<i>'Relevant CRED-Curriculum, education open to all' - SMIS code 2014+: 118327 Project co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Human Capital Operational Program 2014-2020</i>
Description (50-70 words)	The project aims to develop curricular empowerment/training of 55,000 primary and secondary school teachers for a methodological approach focused on key competencies, in line with the new curriculum and adapting learning activities to the specific needs of each student, including those at risk of dropping out of school.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider (If applicable)	primary and secondary school teachers
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Link/ Website	https://www.educred.ro/
GOOD PRACTICE 2	
Name	<i>Training program dedicated to high school teachers</i>
Description (50-70 words)	The Partners in Education Program (PIE) is a training program dedicated to high school teachers, which aims to acquire the necessary skills in working with students in the current context of online teaching.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider (If applicable)	High school teachers/ Institute of Education
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Link/ Website	https://www.ise.ro/program-formare-cadre-didactice-inv-liceal
GOOD PRACTICE 3	
Name	<i>Digital training with CCD Bucharest and different counties in Romania</i>
Description (50-70 words)	Launched in October 2020, the 50 online workshops with various topics invite teachers twice a week to discuss topics of interest and to discover new secrets of educational platforms and online tools. It encourages teachers to ask questions, to look for answers, to share ideas, to stay

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	connected in the teacher learning community during an online workshop marathon. CCD created a space in which teachers should express successes but also failures, to find together resources for quality, resilience, balance, compassion and help.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider (If applicable)	School Teachers/CCD Bucharest and different counties in Romania
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Link/ Website	https://www.ccd-bucuresti.org/index.php/ro/formare-continua/scoala-online/ateliere-online
GOOD PRACTICE 4	
Name	<i>Continuing education programs approved by the Ministry of Education and Research</i>
Description (50-70 words)	Part of the continuing education programs for teachers approved by the Ministry of Education and Research, endorsing blended and online learning courses. The aim is to assure continue education through accredited, approved and partnership programs, both local and national level.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider (If applicable)	Teachers
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National and Local
Link/ Website	https://www.ccd-bucuresti.org/index.php/ro/formare-continua/programe-de-formare-continua/cursuri-avizate#
Name	Digital Guide
Description (50-70 words)	Digital Guide is the only educational project dedicated to teachers and future teachers about integrating technology in the classroom. Through online courses the provider aims to Improving digital educational skills; modernizing the way of teaching ideas, abilities, skills; provide education related digital citizenship and promoting the values of cohesion at the level of local communities, through community projects coordinated by teachers.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider (If applicable)	Primary school and future teachers/ Teachsoup Romania and Google

Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Link/ Website	https://indreptardigital.ro/despre-program/

5. Conclusion/ Summary

From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic the Romanian authorities have made important steps to reduce the problems generated by the shift to online teaching, such as: granting access to the digital infrastructure to any teacher and student, or assuming the responsibility for implementing the project ‘Educated Romania’ which aims to elevate the level of teachers’ digital literacy by 2030.

Overall, Romanian teachers have faced 3 different types of problems with online teaching: (a) Technical difficulties (lack of adequate technology; problems with the internet connection); (b) Social difficulties; (c) Personal difficulties (the need to develop new digital skills related to online teaching).

There are many digital platforms used at an institutional level in Romania, but Google Classroom and G suite for education are the most often mentioned (79.4% of the total sample of teachers use Google Meet to deliver lessons online).

As examples of good practice one can mention EU funded programs (CRED, PIE etc.) or online platforms developed by teams of Romanian teachers (e.g. ASQ).

The Open Badges System is not popular in Romania, only 4% of the respondents are using it, 13.5% heard about it, and 82.4% had never heard about it.

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