Next phase for Teaching Academy Groningen and Reflection room session on Hybrid Education at University of Groningen

Session summaries

The reflection room on Hybrid Education at University of Groningen took place on Thursday 18 June 2020, 15:00-16:00.
The online session was chaired and facilitated by the TAG Interim Board members with the support of SER.

Word of welcome
by prof. dr. Cisca Wijmenga, UG Rector
The Rector recognised the significant work of lecturers in the last months to provide quality online education for their students. This process has highlighted the circumstances in which online provision is most effective, but also the circumstances in which face-to-face provision is not replaceable. We have discovered not only the potential of online solutions but also the limitations of the online approach and some of its pitfalls.
This requires the discussion and definition of a blended approach (also referred to as a hybrid approach) in which online and face-to-face delivery provision are carefully structured in combinations that are most advantageous to maintaining the quality of our education. The blended approach will need to consider elements as the contact between student and lecturer, socialisation and personal development of students and wellbeing of lecturers (climate for learning).
The Teaching Academy Groningen will play a relevant role in the coming period, serving as a platform for lecturers so that the key aspects around hybrid education can be identified.

Next phase for the Teaching Academy Groningen
by prof. dr. Hanny Elzinga, Teaching Academy Groningen Interim Board member
Hybrid education is one of the topics that the Teaching Academy Groningen will deal with in the coming period. The Teaching Academy Groningen is organising events and activities that will support the discussion on matters that are relevant for lecturers at UG. In this way, the Teaching Academy Groningen aims to contribute to more recognition and rewards for teaching and for lecturers, and the quality and innovation of education at the University of Groningen.

In order to make this development possible, the Teaching Academy Groningen - as a community of practice - will focus on thematic areas organised as communities of expertise to focus on key topics.

In the next phase, the Teaching Academy Groningen will have a management team consisting of an academic leader and three coordinators assigned to communities of expertise, to support the academic leader in the day-to-day realisation of the work. The Teaching Academy Groningen will continue to stimulate dialogue and reflection.

Notes and suggestions from the reflection room

The reflection room was structured around the questions below, which were first dealt with in smaller groups in the break-out sessions and then reviewed in the plenary session. Notes and suggestions are available in this document:

1. Digital (in)equality and student well-being
    Which students need special attention?
    How do we best support our students and student learning in a hybrid model
2. Digital didactics
    Which aspects of 'emergency remote teaching' do we want to keep?
    What kind of support do teachers need?
3. On-campus education within the hybrid model
    What does hybrid education entail?
    What is our vision on hybrid education?
    How do we design on-campus education within the 1.5 m society?

1. Digital (in)equality and student well-being

Which students need special attention?
- New groups of special needs students have to be recognized. For example, whether you have access to computers and connections.
- Perhaps more importantly, students in isolation, with a lack of motivation. Loneliness, lack of stimulus from social group behavior. Social interaction is essential for learning.

How do we best support our students and student learning in a hybrid model
- Be more explicit on what students need (webcam, computer, internet, software). What do we already offer and how? Make this known among students.
    - Record lectures (and the chat) as a solution to wifi problems that students may encounter
- Perhaps also a buddy system to connect students to new students, small groups, online communities. Study associations help or might be able to help in this regard. Extend introduction groups (from the study associations) throughout the whole year.
- Get in contact with students by phone. This can be done by study advisors and also by teachers.
- Provide study-related mentoring activities from within the study program and more social mentoring from within the study association.

- Think of alternative learning activities to keep students engaged (use chat, breakout rooms, ask students to present)

2. Digital didactics

Which aspects of 'emergency remote teaching' do we want to keep?
- We need to distinguish between hybrid learning and emergency remote teaching → We are currently not working on hybrid learning, but are trying to survive in the current situation
  - We haven't had the time to really prepare for this situation, we would use this situation as an opportunity to learn
- There are numerous opportunities with online teaching, which we should explore
  - Nestor should be used more (rather than solely using it for uploading documents) which is now happening more due to this crisis
    - Use nestor as a discussion platform
  - Feedback Fruits is a useful software to provide students with feedback and for outsourcing learning towards a different platform

What kind of support do teachers need?
- For the long term, teachers would need more training. They also need more time to prepare and work on developing more different techniques and different alternatives.
  - We are currently using our off-line formats to teach online, teachers need time and training to develop actual online formats
- Lecturers should reflect on the role a lecturer in education and more specifically, the role in online education and the role in on-campus education.
- Lecturers need to be motivated intrinsically as well as being motivated by the University to develop themselves regarding hybrid teaching.
- A platform to share best practices is desirable.
- Additional staff to provide proper hybrid education

3. On-campus education within the hybrid model

What does hybrid education entail?
- Distinguishing between immediate survival considerations and a more long-term vision on teaching.

What is our vision on hybrid education?
- Reflection on what is good education is necessary to determine what good hybrid education is.
- Long-term vision: need to think about what education means: more than just pouring knowledge into students, depends on a social context.
- We need to keep in mind that offering both online and offline education may increase the workload for staff

How do we design on-campus education within the 1.5 m society?
- We need to improvise and look for opportunities to meet each other (if necessary, meeting each other in the park).
- A challenge is work pressure: offering teaching online and in real life costs even more time. At the same time, students may not be able to enter the Netherlands.
- We need to be prepared for a potential second corona outbreak.
- Community building amongst first year students should be a priority

Other reflections

Needed for online education
- It may be helpful for students to learn more about how to actively engage online. Teachers need professionalization on active learning online, e.g., one-minute papers, quizzes.
- Peer learning could be helpful for students .
- Personal contact between teachers and students is needed and important.