



University
of Basel

Institute for
Educational Sciences



University teachers coping with a challenging situation – The transition from conventional teaching to online teaching

Descriptive results of the survey at the University of Basel



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1. Background of the study

The pandemic situation due to the COVID-19 virus in spring 2020 made it necessary for universities to immediately convert 'conventional' classroom teaching to digital teaching formats (online teaching). The University of Basel declared the spring semester 2020 to be a "digital semester" – so that most students have been studying at home instead of in the lecture hall.

To secure the continuation of teaching at universities, the coronavirus crisis demanded a prompt rethinking by university teachers due to the ban on classroom teaching that has led to an immediate transition from conventional to online teaching. On the one hand, this abrupt change is associated with a certain digital and pedagogical potential for change due to the necessary adaptation efforts. On the other hand, it also poses an extraordinary organisational and pedagogical challenge. From an empirical perspective, it is therefore crucial to ask how university teachers and universities are dealing with the coronavirus-related situation against the backdrop of maintaining high quality teaching.

This question is the focus of the cross-cultural CRTS-Study (Coronavirus-Related Teaching Situation Study). The study examines the experiences, attitudes and needs of university teachers in times of the coronavirus pandemic and looks at the short and long-term effects of the conversion to online teaching. For this purpose, online surveys will be conducted among university teachers in Germany, Switzerland, France, Great Britain, Israel, Argentina, Chile and the USA to find out how they deal with the new pedagogical challenges and what institutional support they consider necessary. The results should help to better understand the experiences, attitudes and needs of academic staff in this challenging time and to compare them internationally. The CRTS-Study was initiated by researchers from the following institutions: Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel), University of Basel (Switzerland), Universidad de Buenos Aires (Argentina), University of Duisburg-Essen (Germany) and University of Miami (USA). In the meantime, there are further participations by researchers from the Universidad Tecnológica Nacional (Argentina), Universidad Autónoma (Chile), University of Strasbourg (France), University of Upper Alsace (France) and Westminster University (UK). The Institute for Educational Sciences at the University of Basel coordinates the implementation of the study in Switzerland, at the EUCOR partner universities Haute-Alsace and Strasbourg in France and at the University of Westminster in the UK.¹

This report presents descriptive results of the survey at the University of Basel, which was realized in May and June 2020. 162 university teachers took part in the survey at the University of Basel (Makarova & Kaqinari, 2020)².

This short report provides an overview of main findings based on the analysis of the survey at the University of Basel.

¹ Homepage of the project: <https://bildungswissenschaften.unibas.ch/en/crts/>

² Makarova, E., & Kaqinari, T. (2020). *Hochschullehrende in einer herausfordernden Situation - Der Übergang von der konventionellen Lehre zur Online-Lehre: Deskriptiver Kurzbericht*. University of Basel, Institute for Educational Sciences. Available at: <https://bildungswissenschaften.unibas.ch/de/crts/>



2. Overview of key results

1. Key question	What was the significance of digital tools in university teaching before the coronavirus-related lockdown?
Familiarity with the digital world does not necessarily lead to digital formats in teaching	Although around two thirds of the lecturers were familiar with the digital world and described themselves as “digital natives”, only a third of the lecturers used digital tools in their teaching before the coronavirus-related lockdown.
Skepticism about digital tools in teaching	Before the coronavirus-related change in teaching, only half of those surveyed found that the use of digital tools can enrich their teaching.
Necessity of human resources and time	When explaining why the lecturers had previously not used digital tools in their teaching, the need for human resources (lack of employees for preparation) and time (preparation takes too long) was emphasized.

2. Key question	How did the university teachers experience the transition from conventional teaching to online teaching during the coronavirus-related lockdown and how did they cope with this situation?
Opportunity to acquire skills and to innovate teaching	A striking number of lecturers recognized the coronavirus-related teaching situation as an opportunity to learn how to use new digital tools and to implement pedagogical innovations in their courses.
Emotionally ambivalent experiences	The switch to online teaching was accompanied by positive, inspiring and encouraging experiences on the one hand, but provoking feelings of frustration and overwhelm on the other hand, and required inadequate investments to meet the requirements.
Effortless preparation	The preparation process for the ad hoc switch to online teaching was not a major hurdle for most of the lecturers.
Successful transition to online teaching	The lecturers rated their first lessons with Zoom as positive after the coronavirus-related change in teaching.
Indicators of success	A successful switch to online teaching was primarily possible thanks to the teachers’ own openness / willingness to learn new teaching methods, the time invested in preparing the teaching, their own technological skills and consideration of the students' concerns. In addition, the situational emergency of the lockdown to continue teaching in an online mode favored a switch to online teaching.
Need for assistance	In the opinion of the lecturers, factors such as the technological-pedagogical support of the academic institution / unit, the support and encouragement of the administration / management as well as existing online tutorials have only made a modest contribution to the success of the coronavirus-related switch to online teaching.



3. Key question	How will experiences with online teaching during the coronavirus-related lockdown affect future teaching?
Sustainable influence with an uncertain effect	The majority of lecturers assume that the experience gained with online teaching in the lockdown semester will influence their future teaching. However, the extent of this influence varies greatly in the assessment of the lecturers
Be prepared for crisis situations	Most lecturers estimate that both they and the University of Basel will be prepared for future crisis situations similar to the coronavirus-related teaching situation.