

# **SUMMARY REPORT**

## **4.3. Acceptability of the materials**



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Rationale and aim of the output**

1. Activities 4.3 were embedded into Output 4. The purpose of Output 4 was to achieve the development and testing of an open-access web-based e-learning Toolkit (e-Tollkit) to improve the digital competence of teachers and mobility students. The Toolkit will provide innovation focusing on course creation, quality enhancement, using technology-enhanced teaching (in the way of Online Distance learning) and improving digital competencies. Additionally, it aims to support teachers in digital course development and decreases development time and costs for organizations in course development. This web-based e-learning Toolkit will offer students better open and distance learning courses and enhance their learning success.

Activity 4.3 aims to define the acceptability of the materials from the perspective of the students and educators.

### **1.2. Aim and objectives of the review**

This activity's point of interest was the acceptability of the digital e-toolkit from the perspective of the students and educators. More specifically, our research question is:

- What were the students' and teachers' views on the usability, learning experience, and acceptability of the e-Toolkit in the context of International Week?

## **2. Literature review**

As universities can establish communities and encourage lifelong learning, it is crucial to promote events that also do the same, such as Weeks of international teaching, in an even broader international spectrum (Potts, 2015). However, as the impact of international students has become evident (Tian & Genshu, 2018), it is crucial to understand their experience in such events. The difficulties and challenges they face and how they respond to and interact with these new academic environments and teaching methods are not apparent, especially in pre-test and post-test set-ups (Patelarou et al., 2022).

Numerous advantages of participating in short-term mobility programs have been emphasized by researchers, which encompass cultural, personal, and employment/career outcomes (Kratz & Netz, 2016; Kronholz & Osborn, 2016). Previous research has identified a range of beneficial effects associated with participating in short-term international mobility programs, such as professional development, personal growth, intercultural competence, cross-cultural communication skills, language proficiency, cultural adaptability, cultural sensitivity and empathy, global mindedness, cultural intelligence, as well as professional identity development (Roy et al., 2019).

In addition, it is vital to understand the impact these educational practices can have, especially the ones that include ICT. Besides enhancing their competence, introducing and using different educational practices, whether learning strategies, pedagogy, or new instructional tools with ICT, can potentially increase academic stress (Tallvid, 2016; Dong et al., 2020). Other academic stress factors are a lack of university academic support and insufficient study skills. These barriers are common to international students, as domestic students also face them. However, the difficulties faced by international students are more complex as they are troubled by language issues and uneven power relationships (Tian & Lu, 2018).

### **3. Methodology**

This quantitative and qualitative study occurred during an International Week in January 2023 in Heraklion, Crete, Greece. This study investigates the effect of using the digital e-toolkit during International Week workshops. Specifically, we explored the acceptability of the e-toolkit from the international mobility students and teachers that participated in the event. The workshops were designed based on the digital e-toolkit and the flipped-learning approach.

We conducted a semi-experimental design with a convenience sample following a mixed methods approach and a robust ethical protocol (Petousi & Sifaki, 2020). Specifically, we utilized two questionnaires to evaluate the usability, user experience, and acceptability of the e-ToolKit. The first was a Likert-scale questionnaire to survey the participants' views of the workshops. The questionnaire was based on the work of Nikou & Economides (2019). However, quantitative methods can give us a clear understanding of the findings and the reason behind them, i.e. by connecting micro and macro domains with the use of triangulations, thus increasing the validity of our conclusions (Creswell et al., 2007; Azorín, 2010). Though using interviews would have been ideal, due to the number of participants and the tight schedule of the International Week event, we opted for a questionnaire with open-ended questions. The sample size of the usability, learning experience and acceptability questionnaire was 17. However, the sample size of the open-ended questions was 29.

The Likert-scale questionnaire was analyzed using the statistical analysis tool SPSS. On the other hand, we followed a thematic content analysis on the open-ended questions as it would allow the systematic analysis of the views of several users and concisely present them (Cohen et al., 2018). Following the suggestions of Cohen et al. (2018), discussions were conducted among the researchers while analyzing, grouping facts and statistics, and creating consensus on our results, thus increasing the reliability of our findings.

## 4. Results

The data collected were coded and analyzed based on their methodology. The findings presented below are distributed based on the research questions. As such, we will present the quantitative and qualitative data from the other two questionnaires.

### 4.1 Use and acceptance of e-toolkit

In order to answer the second research question, we utilized quantitative and qualitative measures. University students' and teachers' perceptions of using and accepting the e-toolkit during the International Week were evaluated after the event with a questionnaire of 27 questions divided into three sections: Usage, lecture style, and acceptance of the e-toolkit. The last section is divided into four constructs, as shown in Table 3. Additionally, some of the questions in the usage questionnaire have reverse scoring to keep the respondents from answering recklessly and limit the agreement bias. Also, all questions were evaluated on a Likert-type of 1 to 5. Additionally, we used a second questionnaire with open-ended questions to gain a further understanding of the knowledge acquired during the workshops, possible drawbacks, and suggestions for improvements.

As Table 1 shows, after the end of the International week, most participants believed they could use the e-toolkit quite effectively and efficiently. Specifically, they stated that the e-toolkit was not very complicated (M=3,5), they would not necessarily need a technical person to assist them (M=3,83), its design was consistent (M=3,72), and its features were well integrated (M=3,88). Also, they did not find it difficult to use (M=4,11). On the contrary, it could be operated with ease (M=3,83), other people could learn to use it quickly (M=3,61), and the vast majority were quite confident that they could use it successfully (M=4).

**Table 1.** Participants' self-perception of ease of use

Ease of use questions	Absolutely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
I can use the e-toolkit effectively.	5,6	11,1	5,6	33,3	44,4	4,000	1,230

The e-toolkit needs to be simplified. (reverse)	11,1	22,2	11,1	16,7	38,9	3,500 0	1,50 489
I found the e-toolkit easy to use.	5,6	16,7	5,6	33,3	38,9	3,833 3	1,29 479
I need the support of a technical person to use this e-toolkit. (reverse)	5,6	16,7	5,6	33,3	38,9	3,833 3	1,29 479
I found the various features of the e- toolkit to be well integrated.	5,6	11,1	0	55,5	27,8	3,888 9	1,13 183
There needed to be more consistency in the design of the e-toolkit. (reverse)	5,6	5,6	38,9	11,1	38,9	3,722 2	1,22 741
Most people would learn to use this e- toolkit very quickly.	11,1	0	27,8	38,9	22,2	3,611 1	1,19 503
I found the e-toolkit very difficult to use (reverse)	5,6	11,1	0	33,3	50,0	4,111 1	1,23 140

Students and teachers were also asked about the lecture style used in the workshop in combination with the e-toolkit (Table 2). Most people agreed that the workshops' objectives were clear (M=3,83) and matched the content of each teaching (M=3,88). Though they considered the workshops adequately organized (M=3,83) and with their involvement sufficiently motivated (M=3,61) and able to produce some content of their own (M=3,64), most of them found it very enjoyable (M=4,16).

**Table 2.** Participants' self-perception of Lecture/Workshop style

Lecture/Workshop style questions	Absolu tely disagre e	Disa gree	Neith er Agree nor Disag ree	Agre e	Stron gly Agre e	Mean differ ence	Std Devi ation
It was clear to me what I was supposed to learn in this lecture/workshop.	11,1	0	11,1	50,0	27,8	3,833 3	1,20 049
What we were taught matches what we were supposed to learn.	5,6	5,6	16,7	38,9	33,3	3,888 9	1,13 183
The lecture was well-organized and ran smoothly.	11,1	0	11,1	50,0	27,8	3,833 3	1,20 049
I could see the relevance of most of what we were taught in this lecture/workshop.	5,6	11,1	16,7	44,4	22,2	3,666 7	1,13 759

I felt encouraged to rethink my understanding of some aspects of the subject.	5,6	11,1	22,2	38,9	22,2	3,611	1,14
						1	475
We were not just given information; we developed it with the instructor and each other.	11,8	5,9	17,6	35,3	29,4	3,647	1,32
						1	009
I enjoyed this lecture/workshop.	5,6	5,6	0	44,4	44,4	4,166	1,09
						7	813

Table 3 shows the data referring to the acceptance of the e-toolkit. It is observed that their computer self-efficacy is quite adequate as they feel confident using the e-toolkit (M= 3,82) and possess the necessary skills and knowledge to utilize it (M=3,94). Regarding their perceived usefulness, most believe it can assist them in their mobility (M=3,94), with nearly 80,3% agreeing or strongly agreeing. The e-toolkit can also help enhance the participants' performance (M=4) and academic achievement (3,88). The students' and teachers' attitudes towards the e-toolkit were also pretty optimistic (M=4,05), with 88,2% being upbeat or very positive in its use in skills acquisition and showing their likeness in utilizing it (M=3,75). Lastly, the participants stated that they intend to use the Toolkit in the future (M=3,76) or spend some time with it (M=3,52).

**Table 3.** Participants' self-perception of acceptance of e-toolkit

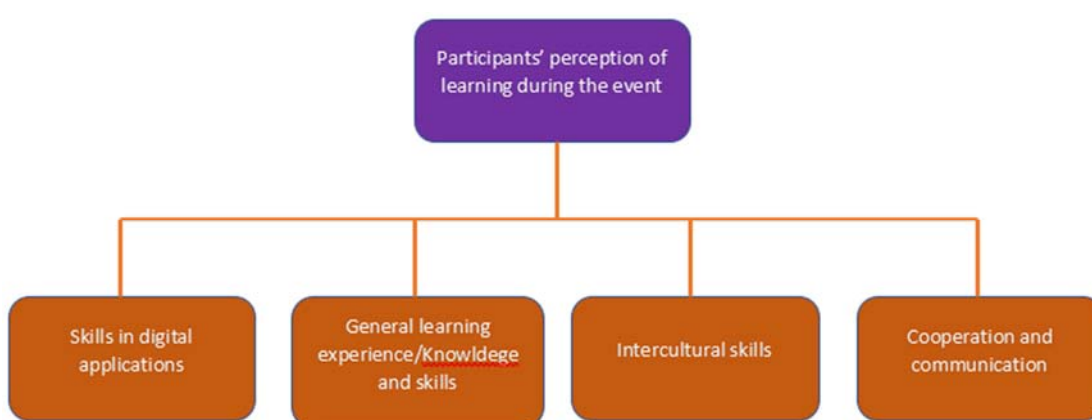
Construct	Acceptance questions	Absolutely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean difference	Standard Deviation
Toolkit self-efficacy	I feel confident in using the e-tool kit.	5,9	0	23,5	47,1	23,5	3,823	1,029
	I have the knowledge and skills to use the e-tool kit.	0	11,8	11,8	47,1	29,4	3,941	,934
Perceived usefulness	The use of the e-tool kit can help me improve my mobility.	6,3	6,3	6,3	43,8	37,5	3,941	1,333
	The use of the e-tool kit can help me improve my performance.	11,8	0	0	64,7	23,5	4,000	1,360



	The use of the e-tool kit can help me improve my academic achievement.	12,5	0	6,3	50,0	31,2	3,882	1,58
							4	3
Attitude toward the tool kit	Using the e-tool kit to learn skills is a good idea.	0	11,8	0	58,8	29,4	4,058	,809
	I like using the e-tool kit.	12,5	0	12,5	50,0	25,0	3,750	1,53
							0	3
Behavioural intention to use the tool kit	I intend to spend more time using the e-tool kit	11,8	0	17,6	64,7	5,9	3,529	1,14
	I intend to use the e-tool kit in the future.	11,8	0	11,8	52,9	23,5	3,764	1,44
							7	1

Based on the respondents' answers, four main themes were identified concerning what they had learned during this event (Figure 1). The vast majority of the participants stated that they acquired skills in digital applications, with some of them stating the themes of the workshops, i.e. "MIT App Inventor", "some new apps for gamification", or "to implement digital tools in education". As this was the central aspect of the workshops, the enhancement of digital competencies, it is very positive that most of them recognized it. The second core theme was General learning experience/Knowledge and skills. Some participants should have stated the type of knowledge and skills they acquired. Most of their answers were noted as "experience", "skills", or knowledge". Though the workshop's main objective was digital competencies, other skills were also part of the learning process, indicating why some teachers and students responded like that. This is also evident due to the last two emerging themes: intercultural skills, cooperation, and communication. The enhancement of intercultural skills in international mobility events has often been shown in such events (Bartel-Radic & Binet, 2020). Additionally, the workshop design, the active involvement of the teachers and students, and the use of collaborative exercises promoted their collaboration skills and intercultural communications. For instance, as one participant noted, "Collaboration with participants from different cultural and professional backgrounds".

Regarding possible shortcomings of the workshops, most of the respondents did not present or find any. However, there was 1 type of limitation that some of the participants noted. The acquisition of digital competencies was the main objective of the workshops. However, some students and teachers were concerned about the coherence and practical use of what they had learned in teaching. As one respondent outlined. "Connection among the presentations and workshops, more focus on teaching and how to teach better. For example, how to support critical thinking in students". Though developing skills to utilize digital applications in teaching was part of the workshops, some participants needed help.



**Figure 1.** Thematic network of participants' perception of learning during the event

Finally, although most teachers and students did not declare any way to improve the events, some participants proposed two improvements. As pointed out, some participants were concerned about organizational issues that affected the event and all lectures and workshops. Notably, one respondent outlined, "For future winter school, I would suggest making more detailed instructions, especially with a map where the meetings, lectures are held, links to the bus schedule and require punctuality". Additionally, another point that was raised was the increase of more workshops. As it was stated by a participant, "Possibility to participate in more workshops". This finding illustrates the importance of active involvement with workshops instead of passive engagement with presentations in such international educational events (Green, 2019).

## 5. Discussion

The importance of digital competence is highlighted in various policy agendas as a critical skill for the future in a knowledge-based economy, facilitating the digital restructuring of society. The COVID-19 pandemic has further underscored the significance of digital competencies in comprehending the use of digital technologies in educational contexts (König et al., 2020) and the work environment (Murawski, M., & Bick, 2017).

The present study investigated the views of the teachers and students on the usability, learning experience, and acceptability of the e-ToolKit in the context of International Week. Perceived ease of use has been found to significantly affect the use of various technological tools by students and teachers, especially in learning (Sánchez-Prieto et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2022). It has often been found, along with perceived usefulness, to be a key deterrent of user attitudes towards utilizing a technological tool (Park & del Pobil, 2013). Our results indicate that small-scale events, such as the Weeks of International Teaching, can assist both international students and teachers in perceiving that they have sufficient capabilities to perform learning tasks and generally learn with an e-toolkit. This is important as it can likely lead them to perceive using the Toolkit for learning as effortless (Moreno et al., 2017). Students attending university often face challenges with their academic studies, mainly when they must complete various learning tasks and assignments across multiple subjects. Consequently, it seems logical to suggest that if students perceive technology as easy and not challenging, they may be more inclined to utilize technology in their learning endeavours.

Moreover, students and teachers showed high acceptance of the e-toolkit as they displayed confidence in using it. They highlighted that it had been used to help them improve themselves learn new skills. This sufficient and high level of responses can indicate that the participants received sufficient training to use the technology for teaching confidently and effectively (Mirzajani et al., 2016). It is also suggested that the participants' views were quite assertive regarding the design of the e-toolkit and how it was introduced to them. The learning style utilized is also evident in the optimistic respondents' perception of the Lecture/Workshop style. This follows other studies in educational learning systems (Fathema & Sutton, 2013; Fathema et al., 2015).

Moreover, our qualitative results indicate that this international event can support digital competencies and other important ones, such as intercultural communication and cooperation (Mohammed, 2022; Patelarou et al., 2023), even if it is not their primary objective. Also, the success of this international mobility event was made more evident as the majority of the participants did not mention any issues or limitations. On the contrary, they were interested in attending more similar workshops. However, a few respondents raised an issue of the

connection between the workshops and general organizational issues, which needs to be considered in similar events as it can negatively influence students' learning motivation in the learning process (Tanjung & Utomo, 2021).

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