

Sustainable Transition of Universal Design for Learning-Based Teachers' Latent Profiles from Contact to Distance Education

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Abstract : The full participation of all pupils in the overall educational process is defined by the concept of inclusive education, which is gradually evolving in education policy and practice. It includes the full participation of all pupils in a shared learning experience and educational practices that address barriers to learning. Inclusive education applying the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which includes promoting students' involvement in learning processes, guaranteeing a deep understanding of the analysed phenomena, initiating self-directed learning, and using e-tools to create a barrier-free environment, is a prerequisite for the personal success of each pupil. However, the sustainability of quality education is affected by the transformation of education systems. This was particularly evident during the period of the forced transition from contact to distance education in the COVID-19 pandemic. Research Problem: The transformation of the educational environment from real to virtual one and the loss of traditional forms of educational support highlighted the need for new research, revealing the individual profiles of teachers using UDL-based learning and the pathways of sustainable transfer of successful practices to non-conventional learning environments. Research Methods: In order to identify individual latent teacher profiles that encompass the essential components of UDL-based inclusive teaching and direct leadership of students' learning, the quantitative analysis software Mplus was used for latent profile analysis (LPA). In order to reveal proven, i.e., sustainable, pathways for the transit of the components of UDL-based inclusive learning to distance learning, latent profile transit analysis (LPTA) via Mplus was used. An online self-reported questionnaire was used for data collection. It consisted of blocks of questions designed to reveal the experiences of subject teachers in contact and distance learning settings. 1432 Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian subject teachers took part in the survey. Research Results: The LPA analysis revealed eight latent teacher profiles with different characteristics of UDL-based inclusive education or traditional teaching in contact teaching conditions. Only 4.1% of the subject teachers had a profile characterised by a sustained UDL approach to teaching: promoting pupils' self-directed learning; empowering pupils' engagement, understanding, independent action, and expression; promoting pupils' e-inclusion; and reducing the teacher's direct supervision of the students. Other teacher profiles were characterised by limited UDL-based inclusive education either due to the lack of one or more of its components or to the predominance of direct teacher guidance. The LPTA analysis allowed us to highlight the following transit paths of teacher profiles in the extreme conditions of the transition from contact to distance education: teachers staying in the same profile of UDL-based inclusive education (sustainable transit) or jumping to other profiles (unsustainable transit in case of barriers), and teachers from other profiles moving to this profile (ongoing transit taking advantage of the changed new possibilities in the teaching process).

Keywords : distance education, latent teacher profiles, sustainable transit, UDL

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