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Digital Transformation and Economic Growth in the EU: Quality Assurance, Staff Competences and Innovation Diffusion

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Lecture 3

What This Lecture Covers

01

Digital transformation in HE

02

Quality assurance

03

Staff competences

04

Innovation diffusion

05

Polish evidence

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Digital Transformation Is a Strategic, Not a Technical Issue

- Digital transformation affects **skills**, **employability**, **innovation**, and institutional **resilience**.
- Universities are expected to support both **teaching quality** and broader **economic growth**.

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KEY INSIGHT

Digital transformation is not just about adopting new software; it is a fundamental shift in how institutions operate and deliver value to society.

Digital Transformation Goes Far Beyond Online Teaching

- It includes **teaching, learning, assessment, support systems**, and organisational processes.
- It is significantly broader than simply moving lectures to an online format.
- True digital transformation changes **institutional culture** and delivery models.

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EU Policy Background: DEAP and the European Strategy for Universities

Digital Education Action Plan (DEAP) 2021–2027

Serves as the **main digital policy layer**, providing a long-term strategic vision for high-quality, inclusive, and accessible digital education in Europe.

European Strategy for Universities

Explicitly links digital transformation with **future-proof education and innovation**, positioning higher education institutions as central actors in Europe's digital transition.

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POLICY ARCHITECTURE

Institutional digital transformation must be understood and aligned within this wider EU policy architecture to secure funding and ensure strategic relevance.

Technology Alone Does Not Guarantee Educational Quality

- Digital education quality depends on a holistic approach, not just the adoption of new tools.
- **Poor digital quality** weakens learning outcomes and diminishes student trust in the institution.
- Quality assurance must evolve to evaluate digital and blended formats effectively.

Key Quality Dependencies:

- Pedagogy and instructional design
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Assessment methods and integrity
- Technical and academic support
- Long-term sustainability

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Five EU Quality Criteria for Digital Content

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CRITERION	FOCUS AREA
Pedagogical relevance	Alignment with learning objectives and effective instructional design.
Accessibility and inclusion	Ensuring content is usable by all learners, including those with disabilities.
Reliability and security	Protecting user data and ensuring stable, trustworthy platforms.
Technical compatibility	Interoperability across different devices, browsers, and learning management systems.
Sustainability	Long-term viability, maintenance, and updating of digital resources.

Practical Application: These criteria serve as a practical review framework for institutions evaluating or developing digital educational resources.

Staff Competences Are the Main Driver of Sustainable Transformation

- **Sustainable transformation** depends heavily on teacher competences, not just infrastructure.
- Institutions do not transform unless their **staff** do.
- Technology adoption must be paired with **pedagogical innovation**.

THE DIGCOMPEDU FRAMEWORK

DigCompEdu offers a structured, European-wide way to understand, assess, and develop educator digital competence.

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DigCompEdu: Six Areas of Educator Digital Competence

01
Professional Engagement

Using digital technologies for communication, collaboration, and professional development.

02
Digital Resources

Sourcing, creating, and sharing digital educational resources effectively.

03
Teaching and Learning

Managing and orchestrating the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning.

04
Assessment

Using digital technologies and strategies to enhance formative and summative assessment.

05
Empowering Learners

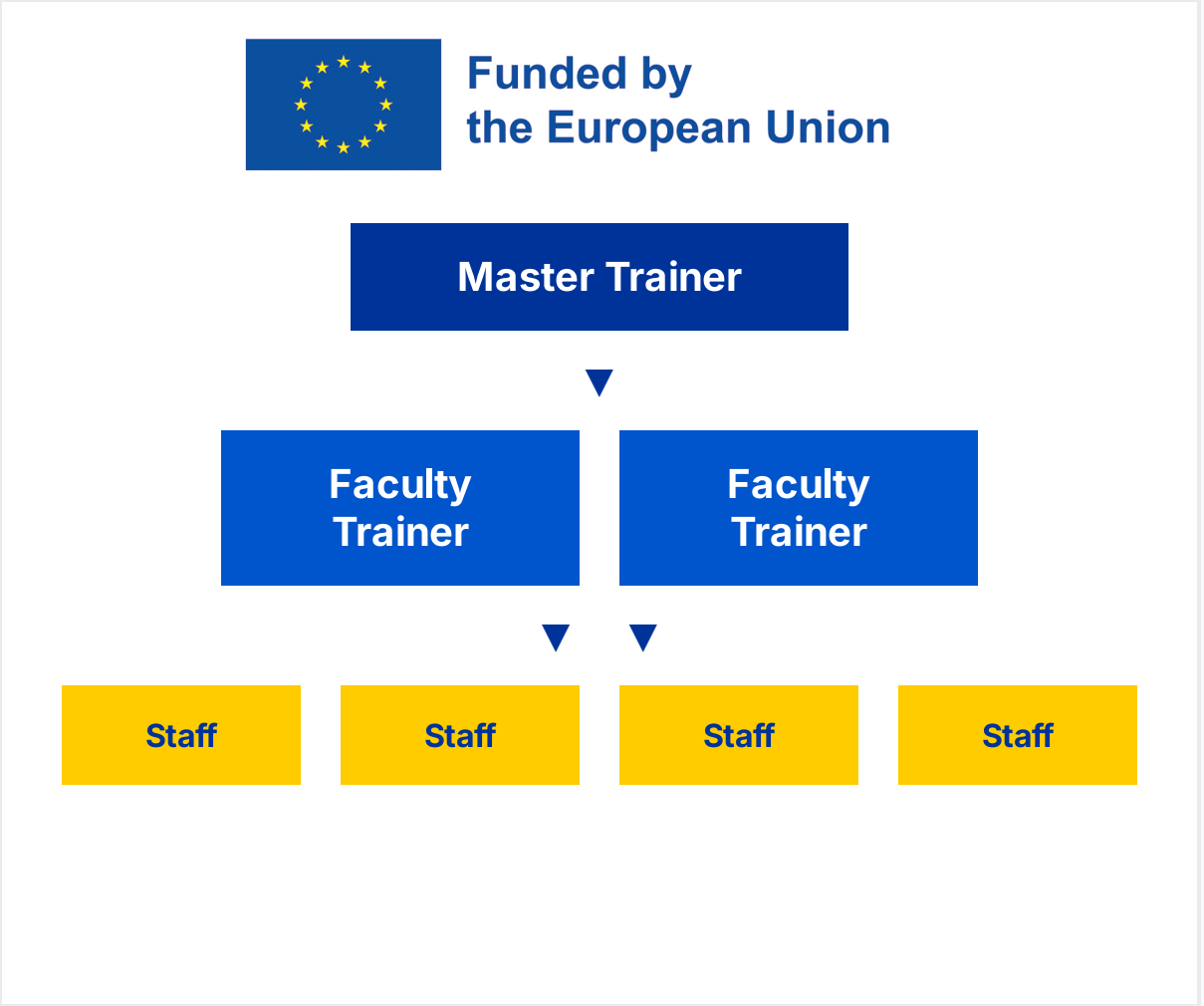
Using digital technologies to enhance inclusion, personalisation, and learners' active engagement.

06
Learners' Digital Competence

Facilitating learners' digital competence across information, communication, and problem-solving.

Train-the-Trainer Models Create Scalable Multiplier Effects

- **Train-the-trainer models** create powerful multiplier effects within an institution.
- They help spread good practice beyond isolated individuals or early adopters.
- Internal capacity-building is significantly more **scalable and sustainable** than relying on one-off external workshops.



Innovation Must Diffuse from Pilots to Institutional Practice

- Successful digital practice must move from **isolated pilots** to wider institutional use.
- **One pilot is not enough** to transform an institution; systemic change requires broad adoption.

Support

Continuous technical and pedagogical assistance for staff adopting new methods.

Templates

Standardised, high-quality frameworks that lower the barrier to entry for educators.

Peer Learning

Communities of practice where early adopters share experiences with colleagues.

Management Commitment

Clear strategic backing, resource allocation, and recognition from leadership.

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Polish Evidence: Student Experience Shapes Quality Judgements

- Student perceptions show that **usability**, **resource quality**, and **teacher support** matter most.
- **Convenience and accessibility** strongly shape overall judgments of educational quality.
- Technical infrastructure must be matched by responsive academic guidance.

GROUNDING THE DISCUSSION

Polish evidence grounds the discussion in actual student experience, showing that learners evaluate digital education holistically, not just technologically.

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Four Practical Implications for Institutional Action

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ACTION 01

Audit Digital Quality

Regularly assess digital resources and platforms against EU quality criteria (pedagogy, accessibility, security).

ACTION 02

Map Staff Competences

Use frameworks like DigCompEdu to identify skills gaps and tailor professional development programs.

ACTION 03

Support Internal Trainers

Invest in train-the-trainer models to build internal capacity and create sustainable multiplier effects.

ACTION 04

Scale Proven Practice

Move beyond isolated pilots by providing the templates, peer support, and management commitment needed for diffusion.

Selected References

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- **European Commission.** *Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027*. COM(2020) 624 final. Brussels, 2020.
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- **Joint Research Centre (JRC).** *European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu)*. Publications Office of the European Union, 2017.
- **National Research Institutes.** *Polish E-learning Quality Research*. Various institutional reports on student perceptions and digital quality assurance, 2023-2024.

Note: This lecture combines EU policy guidance with practical institutional evidence to provide a comprehensive view of digital transformation.

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Questions & Discussion

? Where does digital transformation most often fail in your experience: in **technology**, **pedagogy**, **governance**, or **support**?

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