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Participants' Feedback and Recommendations on the TDP4HE Training Programme: Evaluation Report

Task A3.4

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Introduction

The Evaluation Report compiles the feedback received during the first phase of testing the TDP4HE Training Programme in April 2024. The evaluation report gathered insights from focus group discussions and an online questionnaire highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement. Participants expressed particular appreciation for the training programme's innovative approach to transformative digital pedagogies. These insights will be invaluable to refine the training strategy and address the identified issues to better meet educators' needs and enhance overall satisfaction with the programme.

Methodology

Focus group discussion

Participants

The focus group was conducted by two interviewers from the Cyprus University of Technology. Four academic staff members from the EUT+ Alliance who attended the TDP4HE Training Programme sessions participated in the focus group. Table 1 provides a description of the participants. To maintain the participants' anonymity, the names are not included in the table.

Table 1. Description of Focus Group Participants from the TDP4HE Training Programme			
Identification	Name	Institution	Discipline
Interviewer 1	Elis Kakoulli Constantinou	Cyprus University of Technology	Language Teaching
Interviewer 2	Stavroulla Hadjiconstantinou	Cyprus University of Technology	Language Teaching
Participant 1	-	Technical University of Cluj-Napoca	Language Teaching
Participant 2	-	Technical University of Sofia	Sociology
Participant 3	-	Cyprus University of Technology	Language Teaching
Participant 4	-	Polytechnic University of Cartagena	Engineering

Focus group questions

The focus group included 10 questions designed to gather detailed feedback from the participants. The questions were:

1. What are your initial thoughts about the overall experience of this training programme?
2. How do you feel the training programme has impacted your knowledge/understanding of teaching methodologies?
3. Has this programme helped you understand how important technology is in contemporary pedagogy in HE?
4. How confident are you in your ability to formulate learning objectives, design course content, and establish learning outcomes after attending the training programme?
5. Do you feel the programme objectives align with your personal and professional development goals?
6. How much do you think that this programme has helped you become familiar with some learner-centred approaches and teaching methodologies like project-based learning, social collaborative learning, etc.?

7. How much do you think the programme has helped you with integrating emerging technologies into your teaching practices?
8. How do you expect this programme to impact your teaching practices in the short term and long term?
9. How do you feel about the structure and content of the TDP4HE training programme? Do you have any suggestions for improving the programme to better meet your needs?
10. Any final comments/ thoughts?

Length of the focus group

The focus group session lasted 45 minutes. It was video recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Data analysis

The data from the focus group was analysed using thematic analysis, which involved manually identifying and categorising key themes and patterns within the responses. This process entailed careful review of the focus group transcripts, allowing for an in-depth understanding of recurring ideas and insights. By organising the data into distinct themes, we were able to draw meaningful conclusions and gain a comprehensive view of the participants' feedback.

Online questionnaire

Participants

In total, 24 participants responded to the questionnaire. Table 2 provides a description of the participants.

Table 2. Description of Online Questionnaire Participants from the TDP4HE Training Programme	
Institution	Num.of participants
Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena	9
Technical University of Sofia	5
Cyprus University of Technology	2
Riga Technical University	2
Technical University of Cluj-Napoca	2
Università degli studi di Cassino e del Lazio Meridionale	2
Technological University Dublin	1
Université de technologie de Troyes	1

Questionnaire questions

The online questionnaire included 12 questions designed to gather detailed feedback from the participants. In particular, questions 1, 2 and 12 were open-ended and aimed at prompting participants to elaborate on their experience (e.g. what they liked the most/least and suggestions for improvements. Questions 3 to 11 were five-point Likert statements measuring participants' agreement (Strongly disagree-Strongly agree). All questions are listed below:

1. What was the one aspect you found most interesting or useful in the TDP4HE Training programme?
2. What was the one thing you liked the least, or which you would change about in the TDP4HE Training programme?
3. The TDP4HE Training programme contents met my expectations.

4. The content has been clear and understandable.
5. The LMS/ Moodle platform worked well.
6. The synchronous sessions were organised to allow all participants to fully participate.
7. The pre- and post-activities were useful.
8. The asynchronous materials were useful.
9. The TDP4HE modules were useful, so that I am more confident about its topic now.
10. I think this training programme is useful for my professional/academic training.
11. I would recommend this training programme to other colleagues.
12. Please provide any other comment, suggestion or feedback about the training programme that was not covered in the questions above.

Data analysis

The data from the online questionnaire was analysed manually using participants' written responses to the open-ended questions, and the graphs were generated automatically using Google Forms. Both allowed gaining a comprehensive understanding of their feedback.

Results

1. Interesting/useful aspects of the programme

In the focus group discussion, participants expressed initial **curiosity and motivation** to improve their teaching methods and stay updated with the latest advancements in the field. This was driven by a desire to find their place within a larger network of professionals and specialists.

The following extracts illustrate this theme:

So I have to, I must admit that my initial thoughts were most of curiosity and how to find my own connection, to find my own spot into this large network of professionals, of specialists in the field. (Participant 1)

So, once again, I, you gave me the confidence and you're-motivated me that I am on the right track, according to the methodologies I use with my students. (Participant 1)

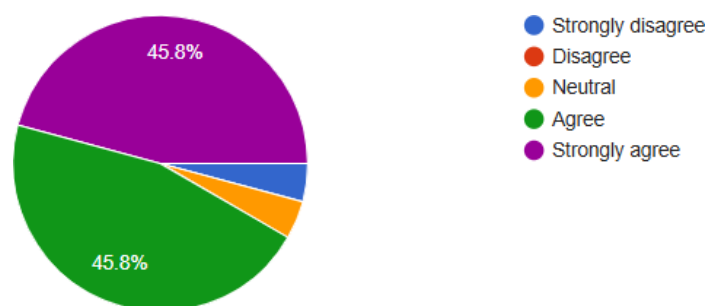
So it made us, made me at least, consider differently how to use technology in the classroom and how the lesson can be more interactive and that students could gain more motivation when using these technologies in classroom. (Participant 3)

Also, the question, "What was the one aspect you found most interesting or useful in the TDP4HE Training programme?", shows as the most interesting or useful the **diverse trainers' backgrounds, the selected topics and materials presented utilising theoretical and practical means at a great level, the communication between them and exchange of ideas**. Participants' responses are also shown below:

- The internationalisation aspect of the team of trainers from different universities/countries in EUT+.
- The diversity of the selected topics, the up-to-date references, materials and cases presented.
- The communication between the participants and the opportunity to share experiences.
- The group discussions and interactions they had in the break-out rooms.

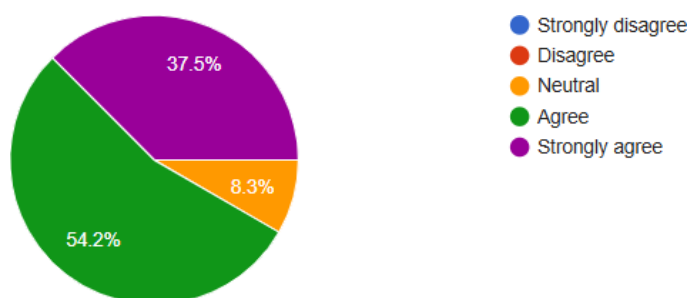
- The multifaceted approach to the problem was a skilful combination of theoretical background and interactive, hands-on activities and practical tools.
- The innovative teaching and learning techniques/ teaching through new/ emerging technologies.
- The modules' content particularly mentions Module 2, “Didactic Foundation of Learning/Teaching through the use of new/ emerging technologies”.

Furthermore, participants found the asynchronous materials useful, as 91.6% strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while a few remained neutral or disagreed.



Graph 1. The asynchronous materials were useful

Participants also think that the training programme is useful for their professional/academic training, as 91.7% of them strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while a few remained neutral.



Graph 2. I think this training programme is useful for my professional/academic training.

2. Things that participants liked/ didn't like

Participants liked the fact that the programme reassured them about the **validity of their existing teaching methodologies**, such as project-based learning and student-centred approaches. They appreciated knowing that their methods aligned with contemporary practices.

The excerpts below showcase this theme:

I came across your course and I am thankful to that it's actually that you highlighted the fact that I knew it was the right way to do it. It is the right way to do it. So, project-based learning, student-centered approach, and technologies to be used in the delivery, in the teaching and the learning and the assessment part of our students should be incorporated and not neglected. (Participant 1)

Yeah..It's actually, it was very reassuring and very comfortable, you know, to know that what you do, you do it in the right way. Because there are episodes, moments in our careers when we question our approach, our teaching methodologies as a result of the experience, since we have got or with the discussions. (Participant 1)

Another aspect that participants highly valued was the **programme's structure**, which involved collaboration with trainers from different universities. Participants appreciated the opportunity to interact with colleagues from various disciplines and share diverse perspectives:

So it was convenient for us. And I also really liked that we had the chance, it was interactive, we had the chance to speak about our minds, we had the breakout rooms, so we were meeting with the other colleagues and we had to discuss about certain things. So it was overall a very fruitful and thoughtful experience full of new knowledge. (Participant 3)

On the other hand, the question “What was the one thing you liked the least, or which you would change about in the TDP4HE Training programme?” revealed the **least favourite parts of the training programme and/or suggestions mainly focused on the overall organisation, training content and teaching approach**. A few of them stated that nothing should be changed.

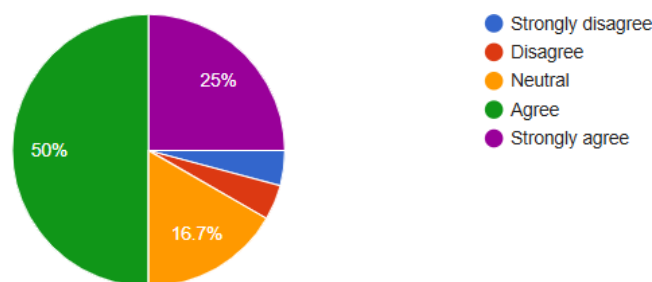
- Overall organisation
 - Follow-up emails from different persons made it difficult to retrieve the information sent.
 - In some cases, long synchronous sessions coincided with personal/family time; they could be kept only for questions.
 - A workshop could be organised in person to complete the program.
- Training content
 - Presentations could be less theoretical and more interactive, with more practical aspects, guidelines, examples, and best practices guidelines for teaching and implementing relevant pedagogical theories.
 - Some sessions were at a basic level.
 - Some of the information is redundant across the modules.
 - The last two modules aimed to cover too many topics.
 - More training on digital transformation tools for teaching.
 - Methods to improve pedagogical resources for too many students in a classroom.
 - Focusing on fields other than language teaching, such as mechanical engineering and robotics, would be beneficial.
- Teaching approach
 - The collaborative tasks with other colleagues were challenging due to the lack of time to meet with them.
 - More time to be dedicated to practical activities such as group discussions/activities.

Participants also considered the time allocated for each breakout room insufficient. They suggested extending these sessions to allow for more thorough discussions and exchange of ideas.

Talking about the length of the breakout rooms, you know, because you try to keep the balance between the theory and the presentations and then the interaction in the breakout rooms. And it worked as it worked, but we felt like, and I'm sure you heard the complaint, it was too little time. We needed more time to, you know, maybe to expand a little bit the timing for how the breakout rooms work next time you organize a new program, right, to provide each and every speaker who is willing to share their experiences the amount of time they need to do that. (Participant 1)

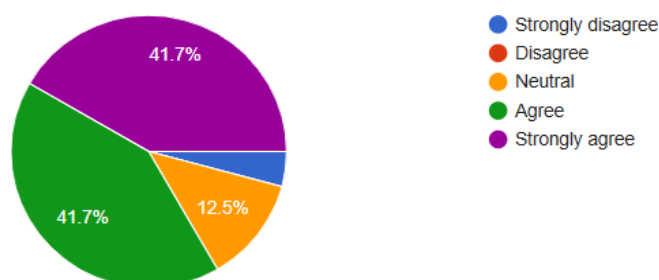
3. Meeting participants' expectations

Regarding whether the TDP4HE Training programme contents met their expectations, 75% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while a few remained neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed.



Graph 3. The TDP4HE Training programme contents met my expectations.

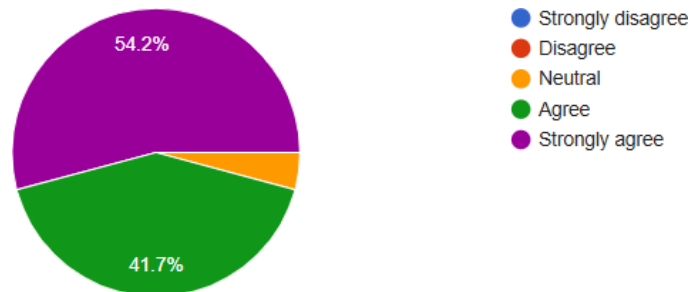
Also, regarding whether the synchronous sessions were organised to allow all participants to participate fully, 83.4% strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while a few remained neutral or strongly disagreed.



Graph 4. The synchronous sessions were organised to allow all participants to fully participate.

4. Content/Materials/Tools/Moodle platform

Concerning the content and whether it was clear and understandable, 95.9% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while one remained neutral.



Graph 5. The content has been clear and understandable.

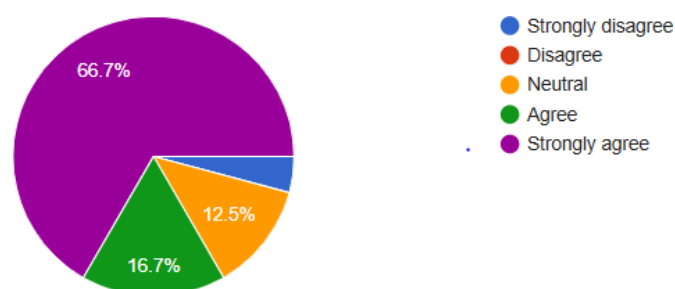
Also, the **organisation of content, along with the use of the Moodle platform**, were appreciated. Participants valued the availability of further readings, presentations, and video recordings, which allowed them to revisit and deepen their understanding of the material.

The following excerpts highlight this theme:

I want to underline the fact that I really enjoyed the way you organised your content and how you used the Moodle platform with underline the fact that I really enjoyed the way you organised your content and how you used the Moodle platform with all those topics connected and the details (Participant 1).

So I don't know if you have the tracks on how many times people check your platform, but I have to say that I was interested in here and there to go back to one topic or to try to find out more about something else (Participant 1).

Results from the questionnaire report that the **LMS/ Moodle platform** worked well, 83.4% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while a few remained neutral or strongly disagreed.



Graph 6. The LMS/ Moodle platform worked well.

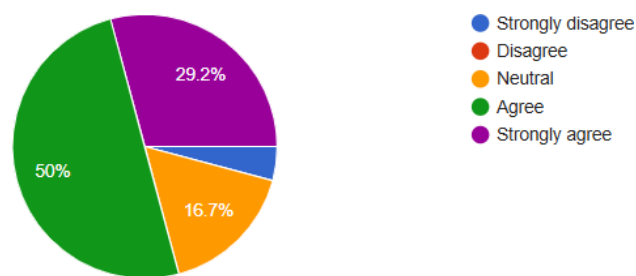
The focus group discussion also highlighted the **value of the online format and the use of interactive tools like breakout rooms**. Participants found the programme's flexibility and the ability to engage in meaningful discussions with peers beneficial.

The excerpts below showcase this theme:

In this way, it's very useful to break the groups into different groups, smaller groups. I think that this has been a very good idea from Patrick, and I think that we can do it more frequently (Participant 4).

I think it was really nice to keep this combination of the plenaries, the sessions, the online sessions, and the interaction in the breakout rooms (Participant 1).

Regarding whether the **pre- and post-activities** were useful, 79.2% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while a few remained neutral or strongly disagreed.



Graph 7. The pre- and post-activities were useful.

The integration of technology was another aspect of the content highlighted in the programme. Participants recognised the need to move beyond basic digital tools to more advanced technologies like virtual reality to enhance student engagement and motivation.

The excerpts below illustrate this theme:

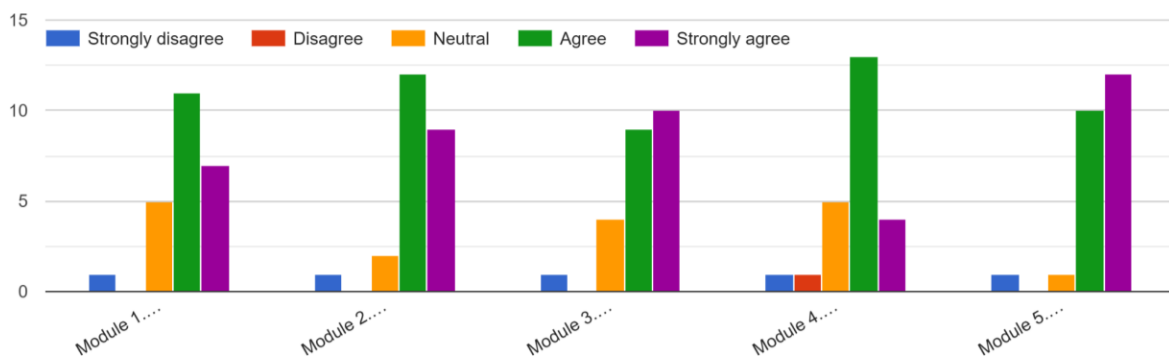
I would say that nowadays in the 21st century we can't speak about technology only using, for example, a presentation or a video in our classroom, just to use technology for the sake of technology. So it was very insightful that we had also a module concerning the virtual reality and all of its aspects (Participant 3).

So you can see different ideas how you could improve yourself and your approaches, which was very useful from my personal perspective. And of course, the digital, the use of digital tools is very important, just because the students, they live in this kind of environment, so we have to try to be closer to them, to try to, I know, a part of their lives, so the education won't be just something they have to pass to get the degree or something like that, to involve them really in as many activities as possible. So technology is different tools, it provides these possibilities. (Participant 2)

I want to underline the fact that I really enjoyed the way you organized your content and how you used the Moodle platform with underline the fact that I really enjoyed the way you organized your content and how you used the Moodle platform with all those topics connected and the details the details about the further readings and the PowerPoint presentations and the video recording of your presentation (Participant 1)

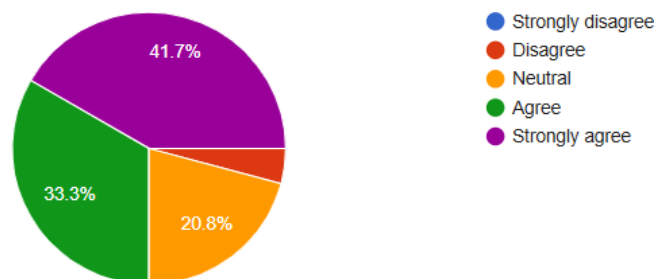
5. Modules

To the question of whether the training programme modules were helpful so that they are more confident about its topic now, most participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement for all modules. Participants tend to strongly agree or agree about being more confident for Modules 2 and 5. On the other hand, Module 1 and 4 concentrated some neutral responses. Only one participant strongly disagreed with the statement on all occasions.



Graph 8. The TDP4HE modules were useful, so that I am more confident about its topic now.

They would also recommend this training programme to other colleagues, as 75% of them strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while a few remained neutral.



Graph 9. I would recommend this training programme to other colleagues.

6. Challenges faced

Despite acknowledging the importance of technology, participants pointed out significant challenges, including financial constraints and the complexity of integrating advanced technologies into their teaching practices:

Of course, we talked about any challenges that we may have about the equipment and that it costs a lot of money. However, it is very important to face these challenges and integrate technology in our classroom and not just a presentation or a video (Participant 3). [...] Yeah, I totally agree with you, [the participant calls the name of another participant here] [...] And again, right, I agree with this aspect about the, I mean, with the financial aspect that it might be challenging in all institutions too. (Participant 1).

7. Suggestions for changes/ improvements

Participants suggested several improvements, including more active engagement with the underutilised community of practice to enhance course development and discussions despite time constraints. Future changes could involve reorganising the programme with additional or different partners and incorporating workshops or small conferences to enrich face-to-face interactions. Additionally, there is a need for more relevant examples and modules focused on designing virtual or augmented reality tools tailored to various specializations and scenarios, as current examples may not suit all teaching contexts.

The excerpts below showcase this theme:

I think that the community of practice is a tool that we have to use and we are not using it. Because many of the ideas, many of the things, many of the thoughts that we have covered in the course can be developed and discussed in the community of practice. We have to feed the community of practice. I think that it's not easy because we have a lack of time for doing so many things, but I think that we have to encourage ourselves and encourage our colleagues to use the community of practice. I think that it's just to ignite it. So, we start interchanging ideas in the community of practice. This is one of the things that I think could improve a lot the courses and our regular teaching because it is with the interaction, it is with the change of ideas, how this thing can flourish (Participant 4).

My first suggestion is to do it again next year maybe to involve more partners or to separate different activities to different partners so everyone will be involved in these activities that's just suggestion of course and the second thing I think it will be very useful if we have a workshop or a small conference or something like that and we can meet in person. I mean divided in different groups of different tasks. I think that the work face to face could never be the same. I mean, it's much more useful and enrich all the people participating in it (Participant 2).

I really enjoyed the one with Dali that you had as an example included in your course, but I'm not sure of how relevant that is in my teaching context. So maybe one extra module that you could include or at least one session would be to create those groups groups in which we might design one particular virtual reality tool or augmented reality tool that could work or not, I'm not sure. But I felt at that stage of the module that further into specific scenarios, cases for different specializations (Participant 1).

But in the two sessions I attended, what I miss what's more focus in specific problems. Let's say, to use technology is very far from easy. When you want to integrate, for example, virtual reality in your class is not something that you can do easily. You need, I think, I think my experience, at least in the things that I am teaching, for me is not easy. And there is another thing that I miss is how to provide interaction with technology. (Participant 4)

8. Recommendations

Based on the results of the focus group and the evaluation questionnaire, several recommendations can be proposed.

Firstly, it would be beneficial to engage participants before the programme begins to maintain and boost initial curiosity and motivation.

In terms of pedagogical validation and reassurance, the programme could incorporate case studies or testimonials from educators who have successfully implemented similar methodologies. This not only provides practical validation but also inspires participants by showcasing real-world applications. Furthermore, hosting interactive Q&A sessions where participants can discuss their existing methods with experts and receive constructive feedback can be highly beneficial. This approach reinforces the validity of their practices while offering opportunities for improvement.

Participants would also be interested in more practical approaches, particularly in handling large class sizes, which would improve the relevance of university teaching contexts.

To address the theme of integrating technology, the programme should include hands-on workshops that focus on using advanced technologies like virtual reality, augmented reality, and AI tools in teaching. These workshops can provide practical experience and confidence in using new tools. Additionally, providing comprehensive guides and tutorials tailored to various teaching contexts can support participants in effectively integrating these technologies into their classrooms.

Recognising the challenges in implementing technology, it is crucial to discuss strategies for resource allocation, such as acquiring funding or grants to overcome financial constraints. Simplifying the integration process by offering step-by-step guides can also help participants incorporate technology with minimal complexity and resources. This dual approach addresses both financial and practical barriers.

The programme's collaborative learning and networking aspect can be enhanced by organising participants into smaller, themed groups based on their disciplines or interests. This facilitates more relevant and in-depth discussions. Additionally, planning periodic online meetups can help maintain and strengthen professional connections, fostering a robust network of educators. The TDP4HE Community of Practice can assist in this effort.

Enhancing the interactive and flexible learning environment is another key area for improvement. Providing flexible scheduling options can also accommodate participants' diverse needs and time zones, ensuring everyone can participate fully.

Regarding suggestions for improvement, it is advised to make greater use of the underutilised the TDP4HE Community of Practice, which can significantly enhance discussions despite time constraints. Furthermore, there is a need to integrate more relevant examples and modules that focus on designing virtual or augmented reality tools specific to various specialisations and scenarios, as the current examples may not apply to all teaching contexts.

To address the need for longer interaction periods, extending the time allocated for breakout room interactions can allow for more thorough discussions and exchanging ideas.

Conclusions

The focus group discussion and questionnaire provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of the training programme held in April, both of which provided several recommendations to enhance the TDP4HE Training Programme.

Implementing these suggestions can significantly improve the training programme, making it more effective, engaging, and valuable for participants. By addressing their feedback and needs, the programme can better support educators in enhancing their teaching practices and integrating innovative technologies.

Overall, participants found the program informative and engaging, with minor adjustments recommended to enhance practicality and accessibility.

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