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Regional Conference on Learning and Teaching Space in Education

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POLITICS AND PRACTICE OF THE DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND USE OF L&T SPACES IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

A COMPARISON OF CASE STUDIES FROM GERMANY, PORTUGAL AND THE UNITED KINGDOM



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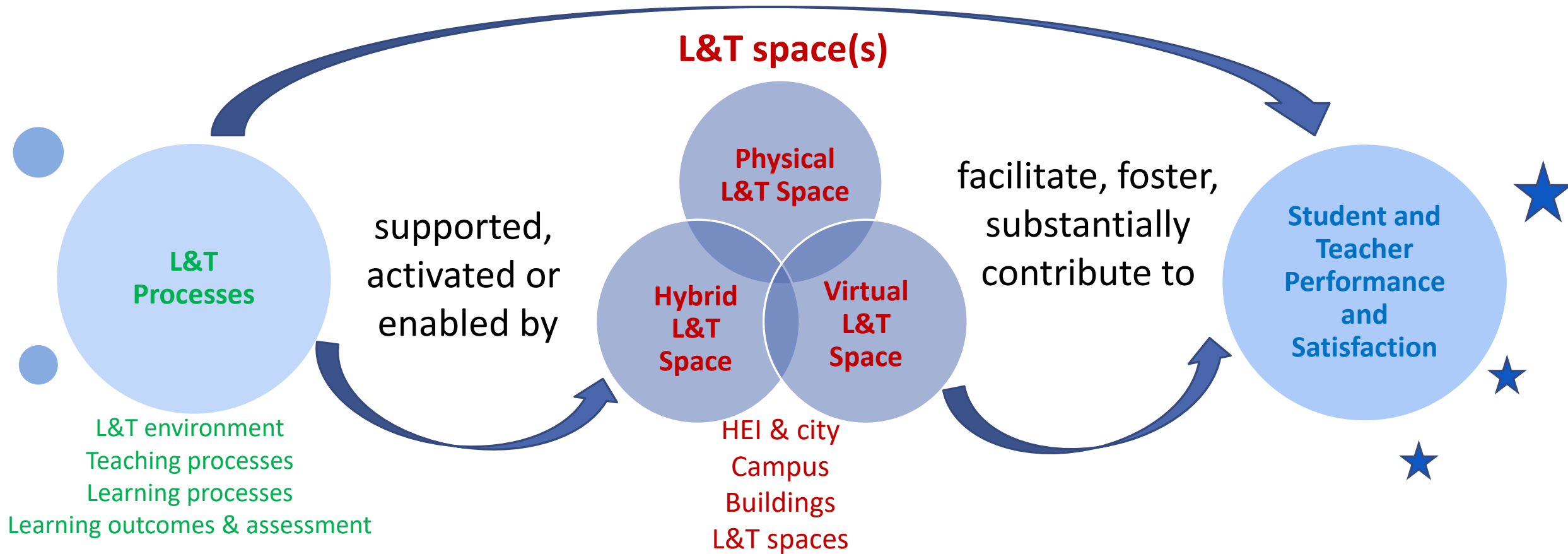
Content

All about **politics/policies and practice for the design, implementation and use of L&T spaces in HE**



- ✓ **Introduction**
- ✓ **Methodology**
- ✓ **Comparative SWOT analysis**
of case studies from **Germany, Portugal and the United Kingdom**
- ✓ **Summary: key challenges**

Introduction



The role and importance of L&T spaces in HEIs has long been under-researched

(Temple, 2008)

Introduction



The Education and Training 2020 framework and the EU agenda for HE: priority to the support of effective and efficient HE systems, which includes bringing **pedagogical innovation into the classroom**

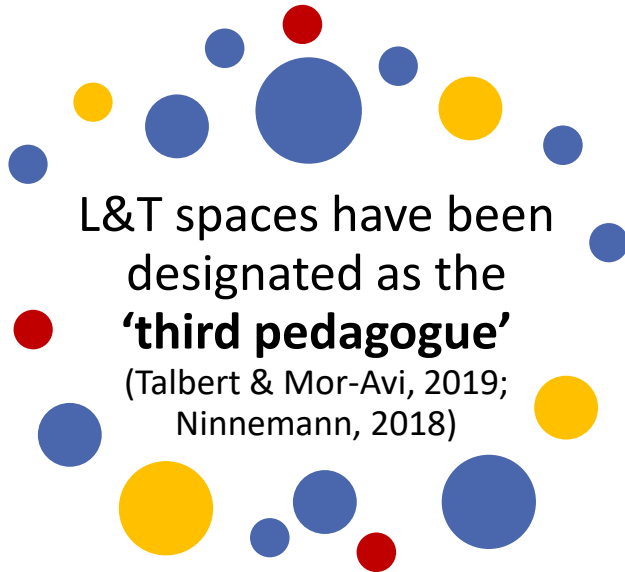


Multiple scientific evidence for the **efficacy of active learning strategies**
(e.g., Hsieh, 2013; Granito & Santana, 2016)



Active learning strategies implementation needs
flexible and technology-enriched new L&T spaces supporting **active, collaborative, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, problem-solving L&T methodologies**
(e.g., Elkington & Bligh, 2019; Pombo et al., 2017; Wilson & Randall, 2012)

Introduction



L&T spaces have been designated as the **'third pedagogue'** (Talbert & Mor-Avi, 2019; Ninnemann, 2018)



Design, equipment, flexible use options and use competences of "space" affect L&T motivation, behaviour and processes, and thus learning outcomes and success

At first glance, three **major factors** seem to inform current design and implementation of L&T space in HEIs:

- 1) Supporting and facilitating **social, active** and **problem-based** learning (keywords: **user-centred design**; **self-determined** learning)
- 2) Enriching L&T through **digital tools** and **methodologies**
- 3) **Optimization/minimization** of the **required L&T competencies** (technical and digital accessibility)

Introduction

Against this backdrop and based on results of the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership
Learning and teaching space in higher education (LTSHE, 2021)

**Comparative SWOT analysis of politics/policies and practice
of the design and implementation of L&T spaces**

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German HE system & HEIs
(National and institutional levels)

German HEI
(Case study of experience)

Portuguese HE system & HEIs
(National and institutional levels)

Portuguese HEI
(Case study of experience)

United Kingdom HE system & HEIs
(National and institutional levels)

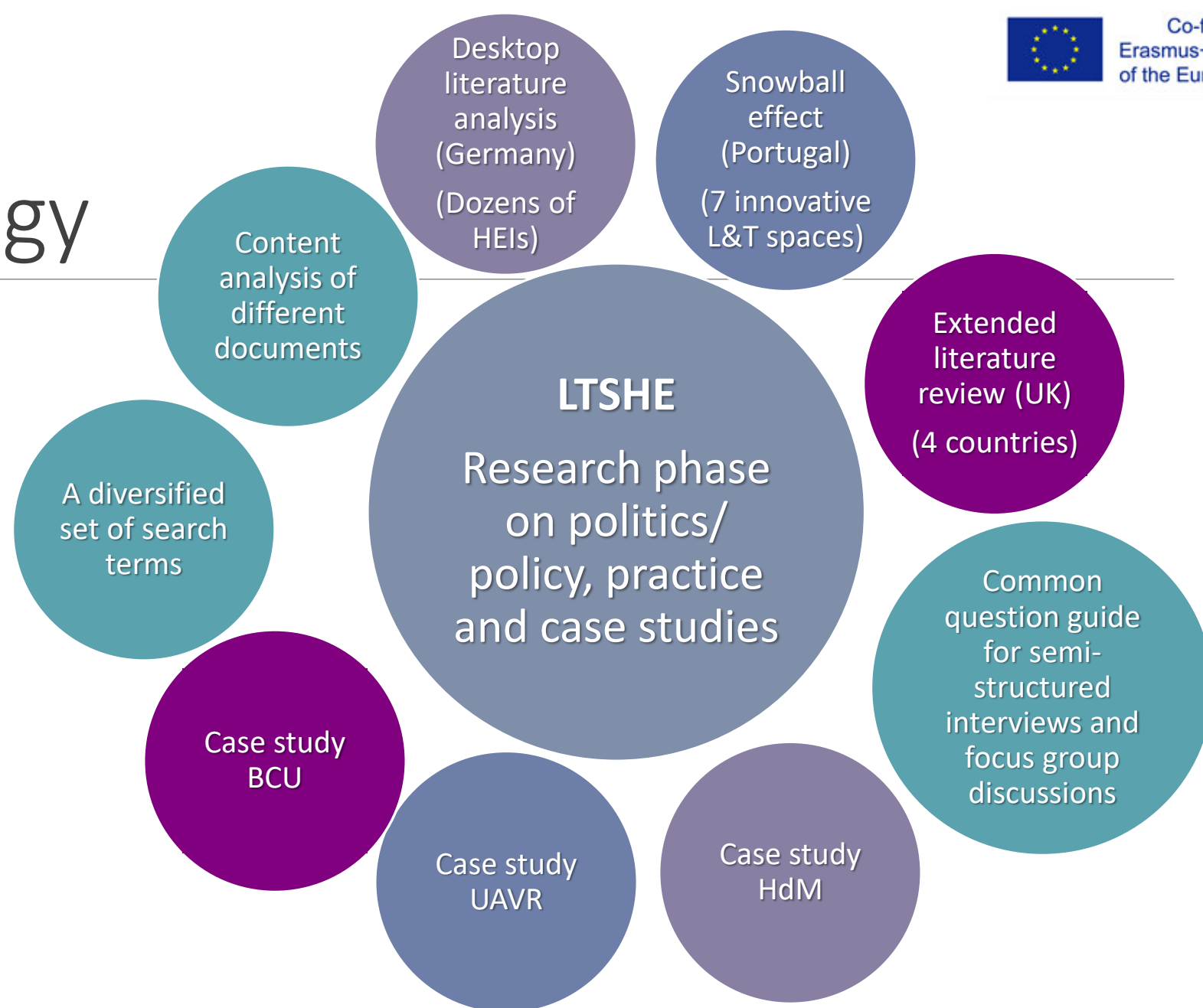
United Kingdom HEI
(Case study of experience)



Methodology

Area

Digitalisation in HE
Digitalisation of L&T formats
Digital transformation
HE funding programmes
HE law
Infrastructure
Innovative
L&T in HE
L&T spaces
Pedagogic innovation
Quality assurance of digital(ised) L&T
Quality assurance of L&T spaces
Room
Self-directed learning
Space
Space design
Spatial flexibility
Time flexibility
University didactics
University organisation
University strategy



Comparative SWOT analysis of case studies

Strengths of HE System and HEIs in Germany, Portugal and the UK

Strengths – Germany

- Shift from teaching to learning is taken seriously
- Many HEIs are active in designing and implementing innovative L&T spaces (even before the Corona pandemic) (e.g., flexible furniture; collaborative L&T spaces; hybrid; Maker & Production spaces)
- L&T spaces are a general concern in the accreditation of study programmes and institutions

Strengths – Portugal

- L&T spaces are a concern in the accreditation of study programmes and institutions
- Public universities' strategic and activities plans evidence the importance given to L&T spaces for the L&T process
- Specific cases of innovative L&T spaces

Strengths – United Kingdom

- Institutions have autonomy to build as they please
- Shift to learner-focused learning approaches
- Building-in of technology-enhanced learning aids

Comparative SWOT analysis of case studies

Weaknesses of HE System and HEIs in Germany, Portugal and the UK

Weaknesses – Germany

- Overarching strategies for design & implementation of innovative L&T spaces are largely missing
- Strategies for digitalisation are largely missing
- Activities are frequently based on time-limited project funding
- Activities are often carried out solely at individual HEIs
- Deficient or lacking professional training of teachers and technical staff in L&T space issues
- Lack of digital competencies of teachers (and students)
- Deficient participation of stakeholders
- Monitoring and stocktaking of the availability of L&T spaces, physical, hybrid and virtual, seems to be underdeveloped at individual HEIs

Weaknesses – Portugal

- Lack of references to L&T spaces in Portuguese national policy laws and regulations
- Digitalisation, didactics, pedagogy and curriculum design and the importance and status of physical L&T spaces almost absent from national laws
- Lack of specific information on L&T spaces that enhance innovative L&T in the universities' official documents
- Absence of themes such as demands of sustainability, internationalisation, diversity, inclusivity and quality assurance of design and implementation of L&T spaces in the universities' strategic documents

Weaknesses – UK

- Limited policy engagement with L&T space
- Digitisation has been gradual but forced to speed up owing to Covid pandemic requirements
- Virtual spaces depend on access to good quality facilities
- Teacher awareness of how to use different spaces
- Autonomy leads to bad practice as well as good practice

Comparative SWOT analysis of case studies

Opportunities of HE System and HEIs in Germany, Portugal and the UK

Opportunities – Germany

- Provisions and requirements from HE politics are scarce (reflecting the freedom of L&T guaranteed by the German constitution)
- Individual organisational units of HEIs are provided with great scope for decision-making and action with respect to L&T spaces design and implementation
- Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the digitalisation of L&T spaces and its discourse (digital, hybrid; tools; competencies)

Opportunities – Portugal

- Recent presence in the agendas of HEIs of concerns with L&T pedagogic innovation and improvement
- Decisions on L&T spaces left to institutions under their autonomy status regarding pedagogy
- Specific cases of innovative L&T spaces
- COVID-19 pandemic crisis which brought the need for pedagogic innovation and digitalisation in HE – *Skills 4 pós-COVID – Competências para o Futuro* (Competences for the Future) initiative

Opportunities – UK

- Institutional autonomy allows experiment and varying practice
- There is significant informal sharing of ideas between institutions
- Virtual learning environment development – forced to progress with Covid
- Technological developments enable smarter use of buildings

Comparative SWOT analysis of case studies

Threats of HE System and HEIs in Germany, Portugal and the UK

Threats – Germany

- Institutional responsibilities and financing models for the realisation of spatial conversions and new HEI buildings are largely unclear
- Equipping public HEIs with room and space is notoriously underfunded, including L&T spaces
- Intransparent or lacking information and data about L&T spaces – physical, digital, hybrid – on institutional, federal state and nationwide levels

Threats – Portugal

- Lack of funds for equipping HEIs with room and space, in particular innovative L&T spaces
- Decisions on L&T spaces left to institutions under their autonomy status regarding pedagogy

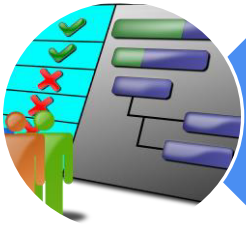
Threats – UK

- Lack of standardisation and guidelines for institutions in building new spaces
- Building of experimental spaces that are designed without reference to actual needs
- Funding cutbacks
- Tendency for space to be designed without engagement with teachers and students

Summary: key challenges of politics/policy and practice for the design and implementation of L&T spaces in the German, Portuguese and UK HE systems



Legal requirements, administrative regulations or HEI strategies concerning the design and implementation of L&T spaces are **scarce** (or hard to detect)



Strategies, stocktaking and monitoring with respect to the **needs and use of L&T spaces** are often patchy or **deficient** or even non-existent



As a rule, **funds are heavily limited** for equipping HEIs with room and space, in particular innovative L&T spaces



Therefore, L&T space design and implementation activities usually have **project character**, i.e., they are **HEI-specific** and **temporally limited** and have **restricted options** for interinstitutional and **system-wide comparison** and **benchlearning**

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