**QuaranTrain: An international community of practice for learning**

POSTED [21ST JULY 2020](https://www.openphysiojournal.com/article/quarantrain-an-international-community-of-practice-for-learning/) [JOOST VAN WIJCHEN](https://www.openphysiojournal.com/author/joostvanwijchen/)

Authors: *Joost van Wijchen, Roger Kerry & Maria Nordheim Alme* / Submitted: 19 July 2020

**Abstract**

The recent Covid19 pandemic has presented opportunities for learners and teachers to engage with each other, and the people they serve, in unique and creative ways. Historically, communities of practices have developed to help solve complex, uncertain, and dynamic challenges. Reactive, yet forward-looking, pedagogies can be thought of as communities of practice and therefore be modelled and developed for wide and future use. Here we aim to present a covid19 health resource (QuaranTrain) as a pedagogical community of practice in which shared and co-created knowledge emerges and traditional pedagogical constructs are dissolved. This is a student-led, self-organised learning framework which transcends and dissolves traditional health education pedagogy. We conclude that out of a crisis, new and creative ways of learning can emerge. A post-Covid19 era should embrace these phenomena.

**Introduction**

This spring, the way we organise and run our education had to change. The breaks were pushed for globalisation and internationalisation as we knew it, planned exchanges between organisations were cancelled, teaching sessions and meetings postponed, and classes and conferences were moved online. We had to find new ways of communicating and working together to keep the education going, both within and between campuses and universities. A community of practise (CoP) can be defined as a group of people that share a passion for something or a concern for something, and that they do better by interacting on a regular basis. During this period we experienced how students and teachers came together in such CoPs to learn despite close down of universities and other teaching and learning platforms.

**Reaction to a crisis of health**

Early March 2020, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences became both more tangible and visible (Landry, Geddes, Moseman, Lefler, & van Wijchen, 2020). In addition to the direct impact~~s~~ of the disease, the impact of self-isolation and quarantine on mental and physical state was clear (Qiu et al., 2020). Undergraduate physiotherapy students of the Delta-stream at HAN University of Applied Sciences, Nijmegen, Netherlands (van Wijchen, 2018) wanted to be of support to people in self-isolation and quarantine. Inspired by Ann Gates, the founder of Exercise Works (Gates et al., 2017), they felt the responsibility of supporting and advocating physical activity and mental wellbeing.  That was the moment they turned to us, their teachers, and asked about how to turn this into action. We started a discussion about what is important at that moment in time ~~this stage~~, how we ~~can~~ could support each other and what could up-coming physiotherapists possibly contribute ~~with~~ at ~~this~~ that moment. The result was QuaranTrain, a student-led network aiming to promote activity, contact and good health during the period of isolation. The students were included in our international networks and more and more countries and higher education institutions were included. The students decided to create a web page containing videos promoting physical activity, both for exercise and leisure, and videos came from the Netherlands, England, China, Malta, and Switzerland. Videos showing strength training ~~at~~ on the floor in a student flat, dance in an empty living room, and tai chi from a Chinese hall, started to fill the site. We, being teachers at different higher education institutions in Europe, looked at ~~this~~ the development with excitement and enthusiasm. It was a lot of energy, a lot of joy, many hours of struggle, but still such a strong wish to create and develop (van Wijchen et al, 2020; QuaranTrain, 2020).

We see many positive effects of internationalisation, and one part is the possibility of exchange to other institutions. To be a stranger and get your perspectives challenged, to be in a new group, to learn to know a new campus, a new city, maybe even a new language (Curzon-Hobson, 2013). However, this is not possible to manage for everyone, and we do not have an offer for the entire student group to move around. Therefore, there are other sides with internationalisation that can give students (and teachers) useful experiences from international collaboration without travelling, for example “internationalisation at home” (Beelen & Jones, 2015). However, we struggle to create good options for this and often we end up with sad attempts to bring the world into our classrooms and to give the students experience in international collaboration, without really managing to do so. This is one reason why we were, and are, excited about QuaranTrain (QuaranTrain, 2020). It gives our students, our upcoming professionals, a possibility to collaborate with colleagues and students from other educational institutions. To collaborate between different languages, to see how the education can be different between the different institutions. At HAN University of Applied Sciences, University of Nottingham and Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, QuaranTrain is a part of the program within the physiotherapy education from the Autumn 2020. Not because we live in the corona-time, but because it is a great opportunity for us to work together, to co-construct and to give our students an accessible opportunity for internationalisation. It feels like a gold mine of new opportunities.

**QuaranTrain – a socialisation of becoming a healthcare professional**

QuaranTrain is a network, it is a group, it is a solution, but it is also an example of self-organized learning, an open ended design in which all learners create and develop (Ostuzzi, De Couvreur, Detand, & Saldien, 2017). Independent of our status, being a student, a lecturer, or a clinician, we learn from each other and our contribution is based upon interest and competence rather than title (Blaschke, 2012). It is an example of how uncertainty can be a basis for learning, how uncertainty can be the necessary ground for development and collaboration (Barnett, 2012). We believe there is an added value in learning from each other, in having to trust each other across borders, nationalities and languages. In seeing that the difference is a strength, that there is no need of managing all aspects within a project, because there are others who can fill the empty spots (Dall’Alba & Bengtsen, 2019). We believe this is an important part of the socialisation of becoming healthcare professionals (Biesta, 2015). It is, or can be, a socialisation into dealing with diversity, complexity and uncertainty (Solnit, 2006). We strongly mean that this is an important skill in our society and that having up-coming health care professionals who master this is a huge benefit for the health care systems and for the patients (Miller, 2015). We say this because we think this is an important basis for managing to work inclusive, to adapt to changes in the society (such as the covid-situation, demographic changes, economical changes) and to get a lifelong development of own competence.

**QuaranTrain – a community of practice as pedagogy**

We are interested in framing QuaranTrain as a Community of Practice. In doing so, we recognise the dynamics, the power balances, the ‘connectedness’, and the learning of new knowledge as something much more than merely the outcomes of a group of individuals sharing ideas and facts. A community of practice, as described by Wenger-Trayner (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), transcends the idea of a network of individuals. The domain for QuaranTrain was influenced by a common identity of the people involved – advocates of best health care for a global population. The collective competence of members was, and is, highly valued. During the development of the project, the specific identity of each member (teacher, student, Dutch, Maltese, background in sport, interest in respiratory disease, e.t.c.), together with historical hierarchies and tensions become less overt features. Traditional pedagogical structures were soon dismissed, and any notion of hierarchical power was dissolved through discourse and behaviour. Social learning became the norm, and institutes, organisations, and qualifications were transcended. Characteristic of a community of practice is its inclusivity and humility. Diffusion of ‘student’ ideas and personal histories was natural behaviour as the modesty and openness of members became explicit.

The QuaranTrain community is supported by now well-established fora – virtual and electronic in nature. Activities and discussion can exist within these fora and members are able to help each other with the development and sharing of ideas. The fora are flexible and reactive, for example the organic development of organised space for interested ‘sub-groups’ focussing on a particular topic – say ~~post-covid~~ post-Covi19 rehabilitation – was rapidly facilitated by the medium. The early phase of QuaranTrain witnessed regular interaction with all members, thereby encouraging social learning. More latterly, members work separately but with the ethos and spirit of the community at the forefront of their minds.  Sustainability of a community of practice is challenging as the domain and landscape change, and so do its members. The appearance of a community can change, and perhaps become unrecognisable, for example QuaranTrain now has hardly any ‘large group’ meetings, but the community remains busy at work to solve the problems of self-isolation induced health matters.

What this community offers as practice is sculptured by ‘doing’ people. A community can only exist if its members are proactive and industrious in their character. Such a membership is observable in QuaranTrain and is evidenced by its output of shared knowledge, problem-solving activities, narratives, methods, and experiences. The ‘*collective pursuit’*of a practice which readily and efficiently shares and creates knowledge framed as a community of practice offers us a lens and a model to observe and develop a post-Covi19 ~~post-covid~~, modern  education.  Self-organised learning sits at the centre of our community, and the seeds of the new pedagogy have been sown.

**What we learned**

Though what about us, the teachers, what have we learned from this? We would say we have learned much of the same as the students learned, we have learned to deal with changes in a new way, to include our students and learners in the process – because we became learners too in this process. We learned to navigate in the unknown, to trust the journey we embarked on and to share this trust with all others in this journey (Green, 2005). We have also been socialised into dealing with diversity, complexity and uncertainty. We learned to be curious and courageous, to explore as learners among learners, co-construct and create new opportunities.

We believe there are several examples like QuaranTrain around at educational institutions, examples of strategies and ideas that will follow us, that will not only be a solution during a special time, but that will be incorporated as valuable ways of education. Because we all benefit from it, independent of what kind of learner we are.

**References**

Barnett, R. (2012). Learning for an unknown future. *Higher Education Research and Development*, *31*(1), 65–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2012.642841

Beelen, J., & Jones, E. (2015). Redefining Internationalization at Home. In *The European Higher Education Area* (pp. 59–72). Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-20877-0\_5

Biesta, G. J. J. (2015). *Beautiful risk of education*. Routledge.

Blaschke, L. M. (2012). Heutagogy and lifelong learning: A review of heutagogical practice and self-determined learning. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, *13*(1), 56. https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v13i1.1076

Curzon-Hobson, A. (2013). Confronting the Absurd: An educational reading of Camus’ The stranger. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *45*(4), 461–474. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2012.718150

Dall’Alba, G., & Bengtsen, S. (2019). Re-imagining active learning: Delving into darkness. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *51*(14), 1477–1489. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2018.1561367

Gates, A. B., Kerry, R., Moffatt, F., Ritchie, I. K., Meakins, A., Thornton, J. S., … Taylor, A. (2017). Movement for movement: exercise as everybody’s business? *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, *51*(10), 767–768. https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2016-096857

Green, P. (2005). Spaces of influence: A framework for analysis of an individual’s contribution within communities of practice. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *24*(4), 293–307.

Landry, M. D., Geddes, L., Moseman, A. P., Lefler, J. P., & van Wijchen, J. (2020). Early Reflection on the Global Impact of COVID19, and Implications for Physiotherapy. *Physiotherapy*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.physio.2020.03.003

Miller, R. (2015). “Learning, the Future, and Complexity: An Essay on the Emergence of Futures Literacy.” *European Journal of Education*, *50*. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12157

Ostuzzi, F., De Couvreur, L., Detand, J., & Saldien, J. (2017). From Design for One to Open-ended Design. Experiments on understanding how to open-up contextual design solutions. *The Design Journal*, *20*(sup1), S3873–S3883. https://doi.org/10.1080/14606925.2017.1352890

Qiu, J., Shen, B., Zhao, M., Wang, Z., Xie, B., & Xu, Y. (2020). A nationwide survey of psychological distress among Chinese people in the COVID-19 epidemic: implications and policy recommendations. *General Psychiatry*, *33*(2), e100213. https://doi.org/10.1136/gpsych-2020-100213

QuaranTrain. (2020). QuarainTrain – Home support program, 2020,  https://quarantrain.org/

Solnit, R. (2006). *A field guide to getting lost*. Canongate.

van Wijchen, J. (2018). Guided choice-based learning – In beta Podcast #4. Retrieved October 2, 2019, from https://inbeta.uwc.ac.za/2018/02/09/4-guided-choice-based-learning/

van Wijchen, J., Meijer, S., Geurtsen, M., Oerlemans, W., Snoeijs, K., Groenveld, S., … Gates, A. (2020). QuaranTrain- online support for good health and well-being during the Covid-19 pandemic. Retrieved March 23, 2020, from https://blogs.bmj.com/bjsm/2020/03/23/quarantrain-online-support-for-good-health-and-well-being-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/

Wenger-Trayner, E., & Wenger-Trayner, B. (2015). Learning in landscapes of practice. *Learning in Landscapes of Practice. Boundaries, Identity, and Knowledgeability in Practice-Based Learning*, 13–30.

**Like this:**