Written update of the work of Advisory Group 2 "Learning and Teaching"

Co-chairs:
EURASHE (Ulf-Daniel Ehlers), France (Philippe Lalle) and Netherlands (Tessa Bijvank)
Date: November 2019

1. Update on the work

The AG2 group has now met 4 times, one of which online. A writing group was formed and this writing group has had an additional online meeting.

The **first meeting in Brussels on 28 February** at EURASHE's headquarters allowed members to get to know each other, to identify some areas of work, and to develop a working method. In particular, it was decided for the next meeting to select a series of interventions on various topics to identify good practices and to collect suggestions for recommendations.

A **two-day seminar in Paris on 9 and 10 April** at the Ministry of Higher Education and Research was the opportunity to listen to 8 contributions that inspired the group on the themes we want to work on. During this meeting a drafting group was also formed, consisting of 8 group members who would continuously work on the document AG2 will prepare. We include a brief summary of the 'hearings' we had in Paris here:

Gro Beate Vige – Ministry of Education & Research of Norway
Topic: Norwegian approaches to improve the quality of higher education.
Main take-aways:
- The importance of organizing teaching more like research ;
- not to oppose the two activities but to consider them as two sides of the same coin;
- to set up a "student barometer" to hear their voices;
- fostering collaborations between higher education and industry;
Florian Rampelt (Stifterverband, Germany)
Topic: Strategies for L&T in the digital age.
Main take-aways:
- it is important to think curricula according to future skills ;
- digital age requires new but also traditional skills and competencies ;
- content and pedagogies are equally important (digital and informational literacies are key competencies) so there is a strong need for skills frameworks ;
- blended learning is probably the best online learning.
- Florian advocated for setting up a peer-reviewed national / regional platform for connecting teachers and informally valuing their innovative efforts ;
- allow enough time for those who want to innovate in teaching and learning
Terry Maguire, Director of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in HE, Ireland
Topic: ways to support L&T at national level
Main take-aways:
- any approach should be student-centered ;
- it is necessary to build up a national support system for innovative teaching and learning, (in which students are involved), but grant the different disciplines as much freedom as possible to give them the opportunity to align their strategies and concepts to their respective discipline ;

- acknowledge that teacher qualification is not "a box to tick off", but requires continuous, ongoing development and that it is necessary to establish support structures for this

Melanie Rosembaum (Holy See) & Adam Gayek (ESU)

Topic: how can Bologna inspire flexible learning based on student centred curriculum design
Main take-aways:
- students should be consulted and involved in the design of curricula and learning objectives ;
- constant feedback loops need to be established to assure students are in fact involved in these processes ;
- students should be given greater flexibility in the choice of options for structuring their own study pathways (suggesting that there is probably a need to change assessment methods and to consider them at the program level instead of modular evaluations)
- Finally, they drew our attention to a point that should not be overlooked, but that we would have considered as acquired for years in the Bologna area: ECTS is a tool for estimating student workload and should be equivalent in all institutions (comparability issues).

Michael Gaebel (EUA)

Topic: EFFECT project (main conclusions)
Main take-aways:
- learning and teaching, as an integral part of higher education institutions, should be included in the strategies of higher education institutions;
- institutional leaders must actively promote and enable progress in learning and teaching;
- recognition of teaching as the other important part of academic work (so far recognition is mainly based on research achievements): cultural change is required;
- there is a need to promote exchanges and collaboration within higher education institutions (between different disciplines and faculties, involving all stakeholders: teachers, managers, students, etc.), between higher education institutions, but also between higher education institutions and industry.

Sophie Touzé (president of the Open Education Consortium)

Topic: open education , Open by Default principles in policy making and culture
Main take-aways:
- Creating an open educational environment helps support and enable a culture change. Conversely, the development of education can be hampered by a lack of training, support, peer counseling, opportunities for exchange, recognition and visibility among peers and within the community. Institution ;
- The opening and sharing of teaching materials could contribute to the formation of communities of practice among teachers

Jonna Korhonen , Ministry of Education and Culture Finland

Topic: conditions for development of quality education; teacher support
Main take aways:
- Teachers support students in the acquisition of future skills ; in order to do so teachers need lifelong professional development, peer collaboration, excellent working conditions
- Teachers should be given greater autonomy (freedom to choose learning materials and pedagogy, freedom to decide on the assessment, participation in the definition of the local curriculum) ;
- It is essential to support the in-service training of teachers and to free them from administrative tasks.

Philippe Lalle, ministry of higher education and research, France
Topic: competence framework for higher education teachers written in September 2018 by the French ministry with the aim of upgrading the teaching mission. Main take-aways: - curricula should be flexibilized and adapted to the shifting need for future skills ; - -digitalization should not be part of a separate strategy, but should be included in the overall strategies to enhance teaching and learning ; - learning assessment should be adapted to changing teaching pedagogies et pedagogical alignment with learning outcomes must be reinforced.

A third meeting of AG2 was held in Bologna, back to back with the Bologna anniversary conference. During this meeting, the group attempted to group all the ideas under three themes, and distinguish between what are principles and guidelines (what to we as a group find important regarding this theme) and government recommendations (what can/should national governments do?).

During this meeting the co-chair of AG1 on the social dimension was present and presented the state of their work. It was decided that AG1 and AG2 co-chairs will keep stay in close contact, but the groups will not work on a joint introduction or something similar.

A final online meeting on October 9 was used to discuss with the group the latest changes to the document.

We agreed on the structure of the document and that in general all the elements that the group would like to see mentioned are currently included. There is still work to do in the fine-tuning of the principles and the recommendations. In addition, we want to bring in good practices, for which we will also use the input from the hearings – as described above.

2. Current State of recommendations – draft version of the document

The Paris Communiqué Ministers announced to "add cooperation in innovative learning and teaching practices as another hallmark of the EHEA". To this purpose, the following Principles/Recommendations call upon Ministries and national agencies to enhance collaboration and partnership between their respective higher education sectors, and also to seize opportunities for exchange and collaboration across systems, among governments and higher education communities.

The recommendations are structured under three themes addressing key issues for the future European higher education:

I - *Making student-centred learning a reality.* Learning and teaching is student centred in all aspects, including assessment and is built on systematic partnership between learners and teachers. This entails a culture of cooperation between learners and teachers in shaping curricula as well as an open classroom culture that is supporting the development of future skills and caters for diversity

II - *Fostering learning through improved learning outcomes, teaching and assessment practices that are adaptive to current and future challenges*. Teaching should be core to academic practice in all higher education systems, and responsive to the challenges of higher education in a digital world. Teachers need structural support in their work, including through professional development and career paths.

III - ***Strengthening higher education institutions' organisational development to support learning and teaching***. Higher education institutions must turn towards developing institutional strategies, structures and cultures for future learning and teaching, in order to address the social, technological and political challenges in their learning and teaching frameworks. Higher education institutions need to be sensitive to the evolved higher education ecosystems.

Each theme provides (a) policy recommendations, which are based on (b) principles. It should also be noted that, while each theme addresses a series of specific recommendations and principles, all three themes should be perceived as interrelated. Examples of practices will be provided in the appendix later to illustrate this point..

In addition to discussions and exchanges between members of the BFUG AG2, these recommendations are also based on lessons learnt from a series of eight hearings on examples of practices from across the EHEA. The recommendations of AG2 are consulted with the AG1 and AG3.

These recommendations also reflect the importance of reinforcing the Bologna tools in order to ensure that all the recommendations can be implemented. The Advisory Group is rooted in the fundamental principles of the EHEA, latest expressed in the Paris Communiqué of 24-25 May 2018 as follows: "Academic freedom and integrity, institutional autonomy, participation of learners and staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility for and of higher education form the backbone of the EHEA."

> ➢ **Theme 1: Making student-centred learning a reality**

Recommendation: Governments should support higher education institutions (HEIs) in their efforts to reinforce the quality of learning and teaching, and their approach to student-centred learning, among others through an enabling regulatory framework and funding support.

In particular, governments should focus policy development in the following areas:

Support student-centred learning: Support HEIs in focussing on student centred learning by setting up structures for individual assistance and by creating regulatory frameworks that encourage the involvement of both learners and teachers in curricula development.

Dialogue: Foster, in close collaboration with national university associations and networks, a structured dialogue on learning and teaching. Explore and promote strategies and practices of participative approach in designing, assessing and improving learning and teaching strategies and processes at institutions – which includes institutions, students, scholars in the field of higher education and pedagogy as well as graduates, labour market and civil society stakeholders.

Inclusion, diversity and lifelong learning: Grant HEIs sufficient autonomy and provide the necessary funding to enable them to offer education provision to different types of learners (lifelong learners, part-time learners, learners from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups). Encourage flexible learning pathways: easier transition between study programmes; availability of multiple modes of delivery (such as open distance education); recognition of prior learning.

Make better use of data: Make use of empirical education research on effective learning and teaching. Support the development of data about education, both at national and institutional levels, as a resource for institutional and national policies, strategies and actions for learning

and teaching improvement. Use learning analytics to better understand students' success pathways and difficulties.

Open Education and OER: Encourage the development of strategies for Open Education and use of Open Educational Resources on a national and institutional level, in order to allow learners to make independent use of learning spaces and open materials.

Lifelong Learning (LLL): Governments should develop national programmes and initiatives that encourage higher education institutions to support learners to become lifelong learners.

Underlying these recommendations are the following principles:

P 1: Learners are at the centre of education. They are an integral part of learning communities, they should be actively involved in all aspects of the learning experience, including the development of curricula and the definition of learning outcomes, so *they share the responsibility for their own learning,* in partnership with teachers and administrative staff.

- Higher education nurtures a culture and an environment in which learning in partnership between learners and teachers can take place, with meaningful feedback, including use of learning analytics, and feedback from graduates and employers.

- Higher education enables learners to innovate and utilise new learning environments in order to develop their own competence and cultivate learners community. These learning environments are open, digital, and innovative and learners are empowered to become autonomous and self-directed throughout their lives.

- Learners are involved in the conception of learning outcomes and assessment, including peer-assessments, following the student-centred perspective.

P 2: Learning opportunities are flexible and tailored to the needs and capabilities of diverse learners

- The learning experience allows for flexibility in time, place and mode of learning, reflected in prior learning recognition, electives, flexible pathways and individualised curriculum, and supported by digital solutions.

- Individual assistance is offered to learners in order to support a culture of student-centred learning where peer-to-peer learning can take place.

P 3: Learning outcomes are at the centre of the learning experience and its assessment. An approach based on learning outcomes includes, among others, the following elements:

- Learners are empowered to plan their own learning and be able to have control over the course and nature of their studies, based on the ECTS. Application of ECTS in terms of workload and learning outcomes is regularly monitored.

- Assessments are aligned with the learning outcomes.

> - A focus is put on developing and supporting skills that look forward into needs of society and labour market, for which innovative learning and teaching scenarios are needed, including open and digital learning and teaching.

P 4: Concepts of open education are included into higher education by default.[1]

> - The learning materials, courses and programmes are offered as open educational resources in a freely accessible way.

> - Continued pedagogical staff development is based on open educational materials.

> ➤ **Theme 2: Fostering learning through improved Teaching practices, that are adaptive to the challenges**

Recommendation: Governments should support HEIs in promoting innovative teaching practices and continuous improvement for them, so that L&T can proactively respond to future skill needs, embrace digitally enhanced education, and other demands and challenges – among others by providing the necessary regulatory frameworks and funding support.

In particular, governments should focus policy development in the following areas:

Unity of, and parity of esteem for, teaching and research: Develop structural measures to assure the unit of, and parity of esteem for, teaching and research. Both should be valued equally and recognized as interconnected. Governments should explore how to support the revision of academic career schemes to include teaching, in parity of esteem with research.

National support systems: Explore, in consultation with institutions and their members (staffs and students), the possibility of building a national support system or adopting other (legislative) measures to create a supportive environment for innovative teaching and learning.

Inter-institutional staff development: Foster the inter-institutional establishment of staff development and exchange of good practices in teaching enhancement, for all those with teaching responsibilities at HEIs. This could be achieved by creating cooperative structures for the enhancement of learning and teaching, which would act as catalysts for incentivising and funding such staff development opportunities.

Underlying these recommendations are the following principles (P):

P 5: Teaching as a core function in higher education should be <u>recognised and respected scholarly and professionally,</u> including in academic career paths.

> - As a professional activity, teaching should be recognised and actively promoted within recruitment schemes, institutions' promotion schemes and career paths models, and supported by training and continued professional development possibilities. Both authorities and institutions should implement and ensure transparent and sustainable career paths for teachers.

---

[1] *Open Education is the use of open education resources in order to provide better quality and more flexibility in higher education*

- As academic careers become more and more international, frameworks that guarantee recognition of career schemes across higher education institutions and higher education systems need to be developed in order to support careers paths across institutions and countries.

P 6: Quality teaching needs a sustainable and supportive environment, which is open to change and values innovation, and at institutional and national levels.

- The need for continued staff development has to be recognised and action taken, so that teachers, administrative and technical staff can continue to fulfil their role in a changing environment, with new and evolving tasks.

- As quality teaching requires decent working conditions and an adequate teaching workload as well as attractive tenure opportunities, it also depends on a mature learning and teaching culture that values innovative teaching approaches.

P 7: Teaching practices should reflect the diversity of methods and concepts, making best use of pedagogies, didactics, and digital technology, with the aim to continuously strive for innovation and quality improvement.

- HEIs have to cherish an open culture of experimentation in order to try out innovative pedagogical approaches and digital learning scenarios.

- Innovation in L&T should be evidence-based: Institutions should be encouraged to develop and use research on their own learning and teaching, and teachers should be actively supported to engage with scholarship of learning and teaching to inform their own practice.

> **Theme 3: Strengthening HEIs' organisational development to support learning and teaching**

Recommendation: Governments should support HEIs in their strategic development and innovation of learning and teaching, including better fit for the digital age.

In particular, governments should focus policy development in the following areas:

National dialogue: Encourage the development of institutionalised national discussion and exchange formats between institutions, involving teachers, students, staff and other stakeholders into a structured dialogue in order to enhance broad societal consensus and mutual learning in areas of innovation and development.

Digital transformation: Promoting and supporting digital transformation and open education should form an integral part of national higher education strategies, rooted in dialogue and collaboration with HEIs and their members (students, teachers, and other staff).

Funding innovation: Allocate stable and adequate resources and adopt fit for purpose regulatory frameworks in order to enable higher education institutions to develop innovative and high-quality teaching and learning environments.

Lifelong learning: Governments should encourage institutions to include strategies and capacities for lifelong learning in their organisational development plan.

Underlying these recommendations are the following principles (P):

P 8: Strategies should be developed to foster the transformation of higher education organisations in a digital age.

- Governments should encourage HEIs to develop comprehensive institutional strategies to foster the digital transformation aspects in teaching, learning, study organisation, research as well as administration, and all aspects of their services.

- Institutions should allocate time and resources for developing processes to use digital tools and approaches, in order to increase their efficiency and quality in teaching, learning and administration.

- HEI are encouraged to make use of new and innovative possibilities offered by digital technology, including the promotion of flexible learning paths for lifelong learners.

P 9: Measures to build a supportive environment for innovative teaching should be established/developed to contribute to a culture of innovative quality teaching and learning, including financial support as well as structural support to support teaching and learning.

- Appropriate and sustainable funding is needed for developing and carrying out a long-term strategy for learning and teaching.

- Innovative learning and teaching concepts and practices should be developed and shared in a collaborative and collegial stakeholder community. National strategies would encourage and underpin exchange and collaboration between institutions.

P 10: Educational research and evaluation of learning and teaching practices informs strategy development and strengthens institutional capacity at all levels.

- Educational research is embedded into learning and teaching practices and best practices are shared within and between institutions.

- Learners and teachers are included in a structured dialogue about pedagogical methods and new developments in educational research.