FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION - BOLOGNA PROCESS RESEARCHERS' CONFERENCE (FOHE-BPRC), FORTH EDITION

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Session 5: Bologna Process in the global higher education arena. Going digital?

1. **Fostering digital skills and competencies through discursive mapping of information landscapes,** *Andrew Whitworth (University of Manchester, UK)*

The digitisation of society produces a need to foster new skills and competences in learners. Graduates will move into positions in industry and civic life in which they are expected to make informed judgments using a wide range of information sources and tools for finding, organising and communicating this information, individually and collaboratively. These tools and sources are organised around the learner in what Lloyd (2010) calls an "information landscape", and the skills and competences involved are those which help learners map and navigate this landscape. But where digital and information literacy is addressed in HE this is typically done in ways that orient the learner to practices expected in the academic and/or disciplinary setting, or what Lloyd calls the "epistemic modality". However, to become expert users of digital information outside HE, learners must also be introduced to social and corporeal (practice-based) modalities. This requires at least some collaboration, and for learners to gain experience with selecting tools and configuring their landscape, or what Wenger, White and Smith (2009) call stewarding.

This paper reports on research conducted on a number of small groups of learners as they worked in an innovative assessment environment that developed their stewarding capacity. Through content analysis of online discussions students can be seen employing discursive mapping techniques as they learn to configure their landscapes. This paper has implications for assessment design for digital skills, as it will demonstrate how learners can teach each other mapping and stewarding practices, rather than be reliant on the tutor.

2. **Distant partners: A case study of Global Virtual Teams between Spain and South Korea,** *Enrique Planells-Artigot (ESIC Business & Marketing School, Spain) and Santiago Moll-Lopez (Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain)*

Global Virtual Teams (GVT) among higher education institutions stand as a powerful tool of extending internationalization techniques as well as improving collaborative learning and transversal competences. This study stems from the belief that using these channels allows students to establish connections and strengthen their confidence in networking for professional purposes. This study describes a collaborative project established with undergraduate students of 23 different nationalities in two different business schools located in Spain and South Korea (n=109; 61 in Spain and 48 in South Korea). The courses in both universities had similar learning objectives focused on the development of written and oral communication skills in a business environment. Through a series of semi-monitored activities and questionnaires, the research offered highly satisfactory results, with a vast majority of students expressing how they had substantially accomplished different improvements: team work, learning how to deal with cultural differences, improving communication skills and problem-solving strategies.

This case study can contribute to a broader understanding of virtual exchange activities in higher education in different cultural contexts in terms of the types of activities engaged, the perceived value and learning outcomes as well as shared challenges. This understanding will allow to define common strategies in the practice of virtual exchange and to achieve greater integration within university curricula.

Virtual exchange activities contribute not only to the improvement of students' language and digital skills but other transversal competences such as, problem solving and team work, which seem to become more important in an increasingly complex and competitive world of global connections.

3. **Higher Education Institutions Towards Digital Transformation – The WUT Case,** *Gabriela Grosseck, Laura Malița and Mădălin Bunoiu (West University of Timișoara, Romania)*

New emerging digital technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), cloud computing, blockchain, robotization, Internet of Things (IoT), big data etc. have produced a powerful disruptive effect in almost all areas and have radically changed the way we live, work, learn or relax. Sometimes without seeing or intending, everyone is adapting to digital era. As nothing "escapes" from the digital transformation path, higher education is no exception. So, it is only natural to ask ourselves: what are the higher education institutions doing to keep up with this rapidly evolving digital world?

According to DESI report (2018), Romania is among the countries with the lowest investments in the field of digital education, compared to other European countries. Unfortunately, although different initiatives, policies and strategies have been proposed in the last years, the progresses aimed at the main challenges related to digital development in higher education (such as the digital transformation of the Romanian university space, the governance of the university in the digital age, the certification of competences and the recognition of diplomas, pedagogical innovations or digital skills training) are still slow.

In this paper, we present the case of West University of Timisoara (WUT) as an example of good practice on how digital transformation affects a university and its nearest academic community (teachers, students, administrative staff). The goal is to gain an understanding of what is being proposed through the institutional development strategy and what is happening in our university. Thus, we conduct an exploratory research using a quantitative approach that involves a survey applied to students from different specializations and level of study. We focus on their experience about how our university can prepare and transform in order to adopt an integrated digital approach, looking into topics like: technology enabled services, digital enrollment of students, digitization of administrative processes, digital procedures for recommendations and complains, digital curriculum, new modes of digital learning delivery like MOOCs offering with credits for completion or partnering with industry and/or other economic stakeholders to provide digital badges or certificates to enhance students' career opportunities.

Our finding reveals that WUT must take significant steps toward implementation of digital transformation, being also watchful and caution of its hidden implications.

4. **Digitalisation paths: a case study of Eastern European initiatives in e-research,** *Mădălina Chitez, Roxana Rogobete and Alexandru Foitoș (West University of Timișoara, Romania)*

The emergence of digital technologies is changing the higher education landscape across Europe, challenging both decision-makers, academic staff and students. While the priorities in digitalisation strategies for universities (White Paper 'Bologna Digital 2020', Rampelt et al. 2019) are actively promoted and their implementation is in progress Europe-wide, their focus lies primarily on digital skill acquisition by student learners and teachers with an impact on mobility processes and the quality of the educational offer at the universities. However, e-research, i.e. research using digital methods and tools, deserves special attention since it is confronted with a variety of extra challenges that are either strategic by nature (e.g. insufficient funding), discipline-specific (e.g. classic humanities versus science disciplines) or culture-dependent (i.e. preference for traditional methods in particular national educational systems). Not to mention the fact that the embedding of the digitalisation reform at the institutional level is considerably uneven from one country to another, with the Eastern European countries striking a different note, as numerous studies related to education (Conrads et al. 2017) and business (SEEDIG 2018 Survey; Razvadauskas 2018) indicate: no country from the region we analysed is situated among the top players in emerging digital technologies (OECD Measuring the Digital Transformation 2019).

The aim of this paper is to present and discuss initiatives in e-research, in higher HEIs in Eastern Europe, while summarizing their compatibility with the goals present in the White Paper 'Bologna Digital 2020'. We further exemplify the process of developing an e-research centre, by presenting, assessing and placing in international context the recently created research centre CODHUS, from the West University of Timișoara, Romania, one of the few Digital Humanities centres in the region. The new initiative incorporates complex digital method related algorithms for developing technology-based solutions and digital tools for research, course development and assessment, in order to bridge the gap between teaching strategies and goals, on one hand, and students' digital experiences and expectations from HEI, on the other.

5. **"Bologna Digital" – Actively Shaping the Digital Transformation in European Higher Education,** *Florian Rampelt (Stifterverband / Hochschulforum Digitalisierung, Germany), Alexander Knoth (German Academic Exchange Service, Germany) and Dominic Orr (Kiron Open Higher Education, Germany)*

The digital transformation will impact the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and could help to develop a new vision for the Bologna Process and higher education in Europe and beyond. In recent years, research on European and national level has shown an increasing attention being paid to digitalisation and digital transformation by higher education leadership. The 2015 and 2018 Ministerial Communiqués also clearly emphasised the importance of the topic for the EHEA. Yet, a strategic integration of digitalisation into higher education policy and practice remains hard to find. It was for this reason that the authors took steps in 2017 to encourage a more comprehensive view of the opportunities presented to achieving the Bologna goals by digitalisation. This paper describes the White Paper the authors launched, the motivation behind it and the strategic decisions they took in order to facilitate broad agreement on the potential of digitalisation. The paper provides an interim evaluation of the initiative and its next steps. In this, it provides a reflexive review of how practitioners and researchers in the field might hope to influence policy making processes in the area of digitalisation.