

## **Future of Higher Education – Bologna Process Researchers' Conference, Fifth Edition (FOHE-BPRC5)**

**25 – 26 March 2024, Bucharest**

### **Session 5: Reinforcing teaching and learning towards a sustainable and effective student-centered learning**

#### **1. University teachers' willingness to support an inclusive and effective student-centered learning, Elena Marin (University of Bucharest) and Kallia Katsampoxaki-Hodgetts (University of Crete)**

Teachers' beliefs regarding inclusive pedagogy and sustainable and effective student-centred learning play a crucial role not only in fostering a positive attitude towards inclusive education but also in implementing inclusive teaching practices. Embracing underpinning inclusive student-centred pedagogies (I-ScP) is essential for teachers so that they can consciously employ instructional methods that benefit all learners and cultivate a sense of community to promote inclusive education (Florian, 2014; Erby et al., 2021). Without a structured process for teachers to reflect on their knowledge, comprehension, and approaches to developing suggested inclusive strategies, the foundation for inclusion is lacking (Moriarty, 2007; Glowacki-Dudka, et.al., 2012; Loreman, 2017). This study employed a mixed-methods approach, involving university educators from both Romanian and Greek institutions. They were first asked to complete a questionnaire, and a subset of participants was then selected for interviews. The quantitative analysis focused on several key areas: the perceived importance of understanding students' learning needs, strategies for accommodating diverse learning styles, and methods for promoting perspective-taking in the classroom through non-judgmental discussions about cultural, social, and other differences. The data revealed a notable difference in perspectives between teachers and students on four specific aspects: the recognition of the significance of understanding students' learning needs, the adaptation to diverse learning styles, the cultivation of empathy in the classroom, and embracing diversity in the educational setting.

#### **2. Promoting Student-Centered Teaching Through A Professional Development Program For Academics - A Mixed Study, Radu Bălan, Velibor Mladenovici, Mădălin O. Bunoiu and Marian D. Ilie (West University of Timisoara, Romania)**

In the context of student-centered learning (SCL) promoted by the Bologna process, the West University of Timișoara (WUT) encourages SCL implementation by organizing an annual didactic grant competition. Participation is voluntary and consists of creating a SCL activity project. After the blind peer-review process, the winners must participate in a pedagogical program based on WUT's reflexive-collaborative instructional model (RCL) to improve their SCL teaching practices. The present study aims to evaluate the impact of a pedagogical program on academics' teaching approaches and conceptions, their work environment experiences, well-being, and occurrence of burnout. We used a within-subjects quasi-experimental design with two measurement points. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the 13 beneficiaries. Depending on the fulfillment of the assumptions, the quantitative data were analyzed through paired samples T-tests or the Wilcoxon signed rank test, while the qualitative data were organized into categories via thematic content analysis. The pedagogical program positively impacted academics' SCL conceptions and teaching approaches and decreased exhaustion levels. Implications for the design of faculty training and relevant stakeholders are further discussed.

- 3. Student-centered learning in higher education: relevant quality assurance indicators, *Adina Elena Glava (Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania), Cristina Ghiţulică (National University of Science and Technology Politehnica Bucharest, Romania), Nicolae Adrian Opre (Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) and Petrisor Laurenţiu Ţucă (National University of Science and Technology Politehnica Bucharest, Romania)***

Student-centered learning (SCL) is a key quality assurance standard promoted across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), as established by the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG). Its actual implementation requires articulated commitment, decision and practice, undertaken by institutions, teaching staff and students. The current literature on quality academic learning and teaching explains SCL through various factors, that range from the creation of a student-centered higher education culture to the implementation of active and innovative learning strategies. However, the national quality assurance policies and practices might vary importantly.

The purpose of the present paper is to offer a comprehensive view on the latest thinking and evidence regarding the SCL approaches in the EHEA and Romanian higher education, analyzed from the quality assurance perspective. Our research focus was double oriented. We performed a systematic review of the strategies and frameworks used by quality assurance agencies for the assessment of SCL implementation in higher education. Consequently, we explored the perspective of Romanian higher education stakeholders and beneficiaries on the SCL and on its possible impact for the design of quality higher education study programs. Our main research questions were: (1) What are the strategies and practices employed by the EHEA quality assurance agencies for the assessment of SCL implementation in higher education institutions? (2) What is the perception of Romanian higher education stakeholders on the concept of SCL, its implementation and impact for the curriculum development and students' learning? (3) What are the critical factors of SCL implementation that can be considered in the elaboration of future effective assessment procedures? Our study contributes to the improvement of higher education quality assurance procedures, by highlighting possible future guidelines for supporting and evaluating the implementation of SCL approaches.

- 4. Academics at the core of student-centered teaching and learning: lessons learnt from the experience of the Center of Academic Development of the West University of Timisoara, *Velibor Mladenovici, Mădălin O. Bunoiu and Marian D. Ilie (West University of Timisoara, Romania)***

Implementing the Bologna Process in European universities has faced many challenges, especially in Eastern countries where the academic modus operandi was mainly teacher-centered. Thus, substantial resources have been invested in building academic development units to promote sustainable and effective student-centered learning. This paper presents the work of the Center of Academic Development (CAD) of the West University of Timisoara (WUT), Romania. The activities implemented by the CAD to stimulate effective student-centered teaching and learning and their institutional impact are further detailed. CAD started its activity in July 2016 by employing a need analysis to identify topics of interest, academic availability, and requirements for future pedagogical training activities. Next, the CAD team successfully implemented several projects funded by national entities of around 2 million euros, training around 1364 academics from five Romanian universities. Also, the CAD team developed the Reflexive - Collaborative instructional model, which later was promoted by the Rector of WUT as the university Teaching and Learning Brand and adopted as the main theoretical framework of the CAD training initiatives. Implications for academic developers, researchers, experts, and policymakers are discussed.

- 5. One-time pedagogical events to teach academics instructional models and the effect on students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness, *Marian D. Ilie, Laurențiu P. Maricuțoiu, Mariana Crașovan, Marius Lupșa Matichescu (West University of Timisoara, Romania) and Adrian Marcu ("Victor Babes" University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Romania)***

Different types of pedagogical programs for academics are implemented worldwide. Out of these types, one-time pedagogical events were presented as having a medium effect size when aiming to develop academics' pedagogical skills. Also, the academics' ability to organize the course was strongly associated with students' achievement. In this study, we investigated whether using instructional models as training content in one-time pedagogical events aiming to improve academics' ability to organize the course, could improve their teaching behavior as perceived by their students. Three instructional models (Gagné's instructional model, an adapted version of Gagné's instructional model, and Engelmann's Direct instructional model) were taught in three one-time events, and we used the academics' current practice as a baseline for comparisons. Twelve academics involved in one-time pedagogical events used their new skills in 47 classes and were evaluated by 1226 students. As compared with the academics' current practices, learning instructional models by attending one-time pedagogical events led to improved evaluations from their students. These effects were moderated by class size and students' academic year.