

# **The Challenges of Improving University Teaching and the Role of OER**

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# Why the quality of academic teaching is becoming so important ?

- Massification of studies, widening access;
- Increased heterogeneity of students;
- Rapid developments in all fields of science and technology, including digital technologies;
- Graduates need different **new competencies** like: systemic, creative, critical thinking; entrepreneurial qualities, team work, responsibility for an ethical, sustainable development of society...

***“If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow.”***

**John Dewey**

# Teacher's Multiple Tasks

- University teachers have to fulfil multiple roles in research, teaching, management...
- Question: How do the research and teaching roles compare regarding
  1. importance
  2. recognition – career
  3. training?

# Report to the European Commission on Modernisation of higher Education... (2013)

- We have to achieve a **sound rebalancing** between research and teaching mission;
- It is the *responsibility of institutions* to ensure that their academic staff are well trained as professional teachers and also the *responsibility of staff* to ensure that they are proficient in the very best pedagogical practices and striving for excellency in teaching“;
- 4th recommendation: all staff teaching in higher education institutions should by 2020 have received a **certified pedagogical training**“.

## ...but „there is still a gap between high-level goals and everyday reality“ (Report, 2013)

- „Daily lived reality is an embarrassing disappointment“ (lot of teaching by 19th century standards)
- „Commitment to best practice ... is sporadic at best and frequently reliant on the enlightened commitment of a few individuals“
- Large differences among countries – 3 “leagues“:
  - 1st** – GB, Scandinavian, German speaking countries, Benelux (certified high quality training, centres, conferences, research...);
  - 2nd** – some attention to the above (Baltic countries, Spain, Portugal..);
  - 3rd** – nearly no staff development, publications...

**Question:** *Where would you position your country?*

# Guidelines from Erevan:

- *Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education, 2015 (Erevan conference)* focus on quality assurance related to learning and teaching:
- « A fundamental shift is needed to a **more student-centered teaching**».
- **Question:** What do **you** understand under „student-centered teaching“?

# Student-centered teaching

- Encourages students to take an **active role** and **control** of their learning;
- Stimulates student **motivation** and **self-reflection**;
- Activates **prior learning** and experience;
- Fosters higher order **(thinking) skills**;
- Develops **independent learning** skills in students;
- Provides **multiple representations** of content;
- Uses **multiple methods** and approaches;
- Encourages student **responsibility** for their learning.



# Changes in students' and teacher's roles

Student-centered teaching can only be successfully applied when teacher's and students' roles change:

- When teachers „step aside and let students take the lead“
- When teachers act more as facilitators, coaches, mentors, not only transmitters of knowledge;
- BUT: No change in practices without changes in *beliefs, conceptions* of teachers and students;
- No change without official support (centres, high quality courses , development of OER etc.)

# Slovenia – A Case Study

- Long tradition of staff development (from 70-ies on), courses, publications, rich international contacts UNESCO/CEPES, TEMPUS, NETTLE, EFAD, conferences IUT, CMEPIUS...
- At present: some shorter courses, a certified 45-hours' course at University of Ljubljana;
- Student questionnaires about quality teaching;
- Some institutions apply e-learning, IKT;
- BUT still no clear policy support (quality of teaching in promotion, use of OER etc.)

# Characteristics of quality staff development courses – principles and methods

- „Teach as you preach“
- Experiential and collegial learning
- Varied methods that participants can use later
- Alternating action and reflection
- Introducing students‘ perspective
- Open to participants‘ suggestions and reactions (participant-centered)

# OER & modernisation of higher education

- How does massive development of web-based material affect teaching and learning in HE?
- Enormous volume of information and professional resources is accessible on the web.
- Teachers' tasks: to introduce students to quality web-based learning, to act as mentor and coach, to select and produce teaching materials of high quality.
- Precondition: starting from the best up-to-date knowledge about quality learning (memory, attention, motivation, effective learning strategies, deep processing, developing creative and critical thinking, problem solving...)

# Remaining open problems

- How to motivate university staff to improve their teaching competencies, to introduce sustainable improvements in their teaching, to innovate (OER::☺)?
- To cooperate with colleagues – nationally and internationally, also interdisciplinary;
- How to increase policy support – promotion criteria, innovation projects, R&D centres...?

„Not alone“

