

REPORT FROM HERE ANNUAL CONFERENCE, TBILISI, GEORGIA, 3-4 DECEMBER 2015

The aim of the Higher Education Reform Experts annual Conference titled *Innovating learning and teaching: the next phase of the Bologna Process* in Tbilisi was to exchange experiences, concerning actual and forthcoming challenges between Partner Countries and EU countries on how to make higher education more innovative, modern and harmonized with the labour market needs. The term “student centred learning” posed as central theme, i.e. the matter of understanding the essence of the term and its real implementation in concrete conditions. We fully agree that upgrading HE system and making student a central figure in the overall education process implies greater openness of HEIs, teacher training, strengthening the position of students and the application of new teaching methods, i.e. approaches. One of the problems in achieving this goal is the lack of coordination between teachers and how to bring them to talk about problems. During the discussion within the WG we were able to receive information about different praxis in partner countries in this regard. For example, in Egypt HE teachers are obliged to undergo training by choosing 3 courses created by their own HEIs. One of the preconditions for modern and innovative teaching is to perceive students as equal partners in the education process, not to treat them as “receiving thing.” The introduction of new technologies is not possible without the involvement of persons from the industry sector, using experiences of mobility students and institutional cooperation between HEIs. Organizing students’ services, individual students’ evaluation of professors as a very important tool in the overall advancement of teaching and learning quality, as well as the business approach of HEIs, are the basis for further development of higher education, fostering global competitiveness, inclusion of ethical values, promotion of technology use and creating an atmosphere and a quest for excellence. All of us stressed the importance of developing teacher training as part of institutional strategy and provision of networks for exchanging opinions and experiences.

One of the topics was about the integration of ICT learning in curricula, success of its implementation, as well as obstacles which follow this learning method. In order to be well-implemented, to the extent possible, it is necessary to have a governmental strategy which will predict financial and technical support necessary for its successful operation. Motivating professors to use ICT is not so simple, but it is placed in the category of necessary. The introduction of ICT, as some kind of LLL i.e. e-learning provides the employed graduates with an opportunity to continue their education, 80% through ICT and 20% through physical communication. The functioning of ICT learning is regulated by QA standards and has to be monitored, using the established QA mechanism, very carefully. Most of the present participants agreed that much work concerning the introduction of ICT lies ahead and in that sense we should use the

experiences of the developed EU countries. We are aware that this takes time. Also, current and future ERASMUS+ projects in the field of ICT, whose goal is to improve learning and teaching resources, are an opportunity to make the situation in this area much better.

One of the most interesting topics discussed at the Conference was partnership with stakeholders for curricula development. We agree that HEIs must be leaders in connection with industry. This connection is some kind of guarantee that HEIs will provide the required competencies of future graduates which are necessary for satisfying the actual needs of the labour market. Also, the introduction of internship in curricula must be mandatory as the basis for strengthening partnership with trust and confidence between the business sector and HEIs. We have to work further on upgrading partnerships with professional bodies and introducing the title of industrial professors as in the UK. At the moment, this cooperation is not at a desired level.

The Conference was organized very well. We enjoyed the hospitality of our host and the specificities of Georgia.

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