Outline

HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS IN SPAIN

HERE-ES Project
Student-centred Learning

University of Alcalá, 7 – 8 April 2016

Introduction and context

As defined in ESU's Student-Centred Learning Toolkit, Student Centred Learning SCL represents both a mind-set and a culture within a given higher education institution and is a learning approach which is broadly related to, and supported by, constructivist theories of learning. It is characterised by innovative methods of teaching which aim to promote learning in communication with teachers and other learners and which take students seriously as active participants in their own learning, fostering transferable skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking and reflective thinking."

Student-centred learning was first mentioned in the Bologna Process at the Ministerial Meeting in Leuven in 2009. It has been followed up in each successive Ministerial Communiqué since then. It is considered to be essential for improving the quality of education, as well as for ensuring better access to higher education by accommodating to the growingly diverse needs of a diverse student population.

However, the implementation of SCL has been challenging. Countries have not dedicated the sufficient level of funding and resources that SCL demands, both institutions and countries have not developed strategies for the implementation of SCL and teachers have not been provided with the pedagogical development training needed to have an understanding of the concept and methods for ensuring a student-centred approach.

Successful implementation also demands that students are included as full representatives in all decision-making processes, not only university, faculty and programme level boards and formal and informal committees, but also in curriculum design and development, quality assurance reviews and the boards of the agencies. Flexible learning paths are necessary, allowing for student choice in curriculum, learning and teaching activities and assessment.

The implementation of SCL must also be consistently evaluated. Therefore, SCL was included as a standard in the revised European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, adopted by the ministers at the EHEA Ministerial Meeting in May 2015. Here it states:

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

> **Standard:**
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> **Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.**

Guidelines:

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. This means careful consideration of the design and delivery of study programmes and the assessment of outcomes.

The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching

- respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths;
- considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate;
- flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods;
- regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods;
- encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher;
- promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship;
- has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.

Considering the importance of assessment for the students' progression and their future careers, quality assurance processes for assessment take into account the following:

- Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field;
- The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance;
- The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process;
- Where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner;
- The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances;
- Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;
- A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.

The peer learning activity on QA of SCL will present the most up-to-date information on SCL and how SCL can be incorporated in QA evaluations, provide an arena for participants to explore different methods of evaluating the implementation of SCL, interact with different stakeholders to understand their perspectives, share best practices and identify the challenges and opportunities for QA of SCL.

Following the activity, participants will have a better understanding of what SCL is, what types of criteria can be used to identify successful SCL and how it can be evaluated in quality assurance evaluations, have an improved dialogue between university leadership, national governments and students to create a set of criteria that is suitable for accurate assessment of SCL. They will also have developed a set of recommendations for policy measures needed for further development of SCL evaluations on institutional and national level.

Participants

A maximum of 40 participants will attend the event, in order to allow for as much interaction as possible between the participants.

In addition to representatives from Spain, participants will be invited from 10 other countries. Participants should include vice-rectors of learning and teaching, quality assurance agency and ministry representatives and national ESU correspondents. A gender balance criteria will be included in the selection of participants. Students' will be supported on the travel and accommodation arrangements.

Higher education researchers and experts in the field of SCL and QA will also be invited. The selection of countries for the PLA will be based on the following criteria:

- Countries particularly relevant for the Spanish context.
- A balance of countries that have implemented SCL in their HEIs and QA procedures for evaluating its success and those that face challenges (based on ESU's Bologna With Student Eyes 2015)

- Size of the country and the HE system (covering both smaller and larger systems)
- Geographical distribution (including countries from different parts of Europe)

Event preparations

The event be 1,5 days and will take place on the 7th-8th April, hosted by University of Alcalá de Henares.

A short questionnaire will be sent to the participants a month before the PLA. Countries will also be expected to create a 5-minute presentation on the current status of SCL and QA prior to their arrival. This should tackle at least the following aspects:

- Short description on the state of affairs of the implementation in their country (at national and/or institutional level)
- Examples of initiatives have been taken at institutional and national level
- Current and possible future challenges

Reading material

- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in EHEA (ESG) 2015
  https://www.eqar.eu/fileadmin/documents/e4/ESG_endorsedMay2015.pdf

- ECTS users' guide 2015
  http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/2015/ects-users-guide_en.pdf

- Student-Centred Learning: Toolkit for students, staff and higher education institutions (Time for Student-Centred Learning project, ESU)
  http://pascl.eu/wp-content/uploads/SCL_toolkit_ESU_EI.pdf

- Overview on Student-Centred Learning in higher education in Europe: Research study (PASCL project, ESU)
  http://pascl.eu/wp-content/uploads/Overview-on-Student-Centred-Learning-in-Higher-Education-in-Europe.pdf

- Trends 2015: Learning and Teaching in European Universities (EUA)
  http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/EUA_Trends_2015_web

- ESG part 1: Are universities ready? (EUA)
  http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/eua_occ_papers_esg_web

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