

## Bologna Process Malta Seminars

# STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING A BOLOGNA PROCESS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



A Report

# ***Bologna Process***

## **Malta Seminars**

# **Student-Centred Learning**

## **A Bologna Process International Conference**



## **A Report**

**National Team of Bologna Experts (2009-2011)**

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*A report prepared for the National Team of Bologna Experts (Malta) by Dr Roberta Avellino, Bologna Expert, and edited by Ms Debbie Lora Dimech, Commission Officer (NCHE).*

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*All presentations referred to in this document, and further information regarding the seminars held in Malta can be found on: [www.llp.eupa.org.mt](http://www.llp.eupa.org.mt)*

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## Preface

### Dr James Calleja, Coordinator, National Team of Bologna Experts (Malta)



This document gives a detailed summary of one of the Bologna Seminars held as part of the Bologna Process activities for the 2009-2011 cycle. The seminars held and the reports written are a clear confirmation of Malta's commitment towards implementing the Bologna Process initiatives. Malta was one of the founding signatory countries of the Bologna Process back in 1999. Since then, Malta has been participating actively in both the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) and the Bologna Ministerial Meetings. One of the main contributions given to the Bologna Process in Malta was the setting up, in 2007, of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) for Lifelong Learning. In 2010, a Referencing Report was published by the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC), which referenced the MQF to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA).

In 2010 and 2011 seven *Bologna* seminars have been organised as part of the 2009-2011 cycle. The response from all stakeholders in the Education sector has been encouraging even though a '*Bologna Culture*' still needs to be instilled. The seminars have served as a contact point between stakeholders and experts in the Higher Education field. Some of the topics addressed include: Quality Assurance in Higher Education, International Openness and the External Dimension, Employability and Learning Outcomes. Malta's efforts to adhere to the targets set by the Bologna Process have further enhanced Malta's attractiveness as a centre of excellence in Higher Education.

I take this opportunity to thank the EUPA for organising the seminars and all national and international Bologna Experts and speakers for their active participation. Moreover I wish to thank Dr. Roberta Avellino for the write-up of this report which serves as a follow-up to the seminar entitled: '*Student-Centred Learning: A Bologna Process International Conference*'.

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# **Student-Centred Learning: A Bologna Process International Conference**

## **1. Objectives of Activity**

The main objectives of the Bologna Process International Conference were:

- To challenge the learning process in Higher Education in the context of a desired student-centred approach; and
- To identify indicators that show how programmes in Higher Education can be recognised as student-centred.

The conference focused on: designing flexible learning paths; developing new courses based on learning outcomes; teaching paradigms; the increased importance of the social dimension of Higher Education, the harmonisation of academic and vocational credits and developments in the recognition of formal, informal and non-formal learning. This activity also served as a platform for the exchange of good practices between experts from different countries and national stakeholders, particularly students, academic and administrative staff as well as employers.

### **1.1 Target Group/Stakeholders**

The target audience for the conference were representatives from the European University Association (EUA), the European Students' Union (ESU), Education International (EI), Council of Europe, as well as all national stakeholders in the education sector, particularly professionals involved in Higher Education.

Participants included student representatives from the University of Malta (UoM) and MCAST, lecturers from the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), doctoral students, retired educators, representatives from the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE), the National Team of Bologna Experts, representatives from the European Union Programmes Agency, EI, ESU, representatives from the Foundation for Educational Services (FES), Education Officers, the Malta Qualifications Council, social workers, Heads and Assistant Heads of Schools, professionals from primary health care, guidance teachers, private providers and representatives from the Archbishop's Curia.





**DAY 1 - Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2011**

## **2. Welcome and Introduction**

### **2.1 Welcome Address**

**Dr. Philip von Brockdorff, NCHE Chairman**

Dr. von Brockdorff welcomed the participants and held that their presence at this activity is an affirmation of what all stakeholders in the education sector are striving towards. In this regard, more individually tailored educational paths need to be created and promoted on a national and European level. This may only be achieved with close collaboration between the education sphere, the industry and of course, students. The concept of Student Centred Learning (SCL) extends beyond the classroom. As a matter of fact, the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is to stimulate a SCL approach by providing the adequate environment. There is no one-size-fits-all method in implementing SCL. Changes in curricula are also indispensable in order to ensure the effective implementation of SCL.

The drafting of learning outcomes should focus on what the students intend to know and do upon completion of the said course programme. This is an indication towards the move towards SCL. Furthermore, it is important to set a structure within which these learning outcomes are written, and are made explicit from the very beginning of the course. The European Qualifications Framework and the European Key References for Lifelong Learning, which identifies the main basic competences, brought considerable progress in this area. These changes have been made in quite a large number of European countries.

Undoubtedly, both Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Vocational Education Institutions need to work hand in hand in order to bring out the full potential of each student and thus, ensure a more knowledge-based society, a higher participation rate in Higher Education and a more qualified workforce.

### **2.2 Introduction – Key Objectives of the Conference**

**Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator**

Dr Calleja welcomed all international speakers and thanked them for their willingness to share their contributions and experiences with the audience present. The topic of SCL is referred to in several Bologna Communiqués, which clearly indicates that teaching in any institution is at the service of the students. Every institution should design its own practices to respond to its students' needs and thus, explore educational ways for every student to succeed.

Each and every priority within the international declarations and agreements are founded upon a student centred approach. The 2020 priorities within the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué include:

- **The need to ensure equitable access and completion from underrepresented groups, without any barriers to access Higher Education;**

- **Widening participation through lifelong learning, particularly through the development of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs);**
- **Improving the provision, accessibility and quality of agencies and employment related guidance services to students and alumni.** This priority focuses on the quality of the entities that provide advice services. These services are crucial because they help students in resolving their difficulties and moving forward.
- **Further focus on student centred learning through a learning outcomes approach.** It is evident that there exists a natural link between learning outcomes and the implementation of a SCL approach. Therefore, there needs to be further clarity regarding what students are expected to know and perform at the end of their educational journey.
- **Furthering international openness and engaging in global collaboration for sustainable development.** The emphasis on international openness is to give students the opportunity to widen their knowledge beyond their national territory through mobility experiences. Programmes such as Comenius also provide these opportunities to educational levels below Higher Education.
- **Striving for 20% of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area to have a period of study abroad by 2020.** Valuable elements within such a 'study abroad' period are the exposure to different educational systems, the acquired contacts and the cultural experience.
- **Providing good working conditions and career paths to attract highly qualified teachers and researchers to Higher Education.** This consists of attracting the right persons to the teaching profession. Nonetheless, one must also be critical in this regard and assess the provisions of the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta vis-à-vis the needs and demands of the country.

The implementation of a SCL approach depends on a number of factors, which together foster an environment favourable for a student-centred learning environment. Dr. Calleja identified the following as key indicators of success of a student centred approach to learning:

- The Degree System – All countries have moved towards the 3 cycle system in order to achieve coherence and harmonization, that is, a common language among all HEIs;
- A Qualifications Framework which encourages progression and transparency with full awareness of a chosen learning pathway;
- Quality Assurance with solid structures and convinced agents;
- Recognition (Diploma Supplement and the ECTS system);
- Joint Degrees – Currently, less than 25% of HEIs are involved in such programmes. This is due to the complex issue of ownership of the degree. This issue is being addressed at different levels of Education.
- Social Dimension – This is reflected in the diversity of our population in Higher Education, which necessitates the use of prior learning and the maturity clause system.

## **3. Presentations and Informal Discussion**

### **3.1 Legal Frameworks: Hindering or Driving Force**

#### **Ms. Aurelija Valeikiene, Deputy Director, Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, Lithuania.**

Ms. Valeikiene gave a brief introduction about her role in the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education in Lithuania and explained that her dual role as the Deputy Director of the Centre and the President of CEE Network, allows her to approach the topic of SCL from two different angles, that from a quality assurance agency and that from a very specific legal angle.

SCL is not a new concept in academic circles and goes back as early as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A number of thinkers have contributed in various aspects to the development of this concept. Of course, it was only in the last two decades, that acceleration in the implementation of this concept has been witnessed. The 20<sup>th</sup> century brought about an expansion in the network of institutions, the variety of institutions and a growth in student numbers (especially in the 60s and 70s). There has also been a change in attitude regarding Higher Education, which eventually brought the latter closer to the labour market. The mission of the educational institution to respect democracy and society by providing access to Higher Education and other opportunities was also one of the emerging factors of the time. Undoubtedly, this brought HEIs closer to industry and everyday life. Nowadays, this is all grounded in legal frameworks.

#### What is the scope of the concept of SCL?

Values: *responsibility, accountability, active learning, deep learning, autonomy, respect, collaboration, commitment to continuous change.*

The concept of mutual responsibility between the students and the teachers as mutual active contributors to the educational process highlights the autonomy of the learners. This approach is not about pouring knowledge onto the learner but about active collaboration. Collaboration does not only involve the teacher and learner. It is interesting to note that SCL is not a static process but it is just a provision of principles, which are adaptable to change with time and current priorities. One has to be reactive and pro-active to these changes.

#### What is the essence of SCL?

Learning Outcomes are the goals of the study process by enabling a student to build knowledge. Of course, specific tools facilitate this process namely; mobility, ECTS, teaching and learning methods, quality assurance, recognition, prior-learning and qualifications frameworks.

One must also consider the processes built around studies such as social partnerships, institutional support services and institutional management. Thus, there are many processes, which may not be easy to implement. Caring about students entails providing a number of expanding support services within the institutions. Nonetheless, SCL also poses challenges to institutional management. The latter is transforming and requiring not only a change in mind set but also a lot of resources. Therefore, as one tries to define the scope of implementing SCL at this level, one must recognize that this is in fact a complex task and the success of whether legislation would facilitate this process may vary. Legal frameworks might drive certain aspects but hinder others. Ideally, the frameworks should:

- Promote a culture shift (soft law, hard law);
- Allocate resources, invest in technologies (project money, government funding); and
- Reward good practice (funding to encourage change happening, quality assurance).

Ms. Valeikiene referred to the 'hard' law and 'soft' law within the Higher Education sector.

**Hard Law:**

- Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention, 1997)
- Bologna Declaration on the European Space for Higher Education (1999)
- Lisbon Strategy (2000, revised 2010)
- Copenhagen Process (2002)

**Soft Law:**

- Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education, 2002 (Directorate General IV: Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport)
- Guidelines of Good Practice in Quality Assurance, 2003 (INQAAHE)
- Recommendation of the Council concerning Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education, 2005 (OECD)

Subsequently, Ms. Valeikiene referred to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG) and emphasized that their effectiveness lies in their broad approach and their combination of good practices.

*The standards reflect best practices and experiences gained through the development of external quality assurance in Europe since the early 1990s. It is therefore important that these standards are integrated into the processes applied by external quality assurance agencies towards the higher education institutions.*

*The standards for external quality assurance should together with the standards for external quality assurance agencies constitute the basis for professional and credible external quality assurance of higher education institutions.<sup>1</sup>*

So far, 38 Quality Assurance agencies have undergone assessment in Lithuania. On a national level, states are engaging in Higher Education reforms and setting a specific national agenda. Although Higher Education systems enjoy a different level of maturity, changes are happening on a global scale. By way of exchanging good practices, Ms. Valeikiene outlined the main features of the provisions of the law on Higher Education and Research (2009) in Lithuania and explained that this includes a more detailed quality assurance set up; the implementation of ECTS; new funding mechanisms; and new institutional management.

Moreover, institutional evaluation in Lithuania is carried out through an assessment of real resources and an assessment of activities, in compliance with the relevant legal requirements and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The assessment of activities considers:

- studies and lifelong learning;
- conditions for research and development;
- artistic activities;
- international cooperation;
- involvement of stakeholders;
- responsiveness to labour market needs;
- regional cooperation and involvement;
- the effective usage of funding;

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1 European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

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- the effectiveness of the internal Quality Assurance system;
- level of academic ethics and accountability.

This is further complemented by the process of programme evaluation in Lithuania, which assesses programme goals and learning outcomes, programme structures, staff, resources, the organization of studies and student assessment and programme management.

In light of the above, Ms. Valeikiene concluded her presentation by arguing that legal frameworks whilst on the one hand serve the purpose of orienting studies towards students on the other hand this might not always be the case.

### **3.2 Question Time and Discussion – Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator**

One of the speakers held that it was very interesting to note the political, social and cultural developments which affected Higher Education. Furthermore, legislation is the only part that could somehow provide stakeholders in the Education sector with measures to trust each other.

A participant argued that SCL is something which the teaching profession has been advocating for, over the past 25 years, due to quite a lot of research which argues that the most affective learning method is when the learner is also involved actively.

The language of SCL is completely different because the focus is on the students and not on the teacher. Thus, there still needs to be a paradigm shift towards the student-centred approach. Teachers are facilitators of learning. Moreover, the economic crisis is bearing effects on universities and thus, placing more emphasis on lecturing, which is still deemed as the contribution with most value to the university. Furthermore, the implementation of quality assurance should involve all stakeholders and thus foster a sense of 'ownership'.

In reply it was held that to date, SCL has been lacking attention on an institutional level. Teachers must also be given the adequate tools to be able to adopt a SCL approach and be 'better' teachers. Moreover, the challenge of doing more with less is a challenge to HEIs. Can project money be used in order to replace the funding which Government is not providing? This is dealt with by learning how to change and by adapting to current needs. Success may only be achieved if systematical attention is dedicated to these issues. The issue of 'ownership' is also an important point as these changes may only be affected by a broad commitment. Establishing such commitment is of course, the most difficult task.

Regarding the issue of teachers' workload, a speaker argued that teachers must teach each other and respect each others' work. Society is, in a way, a deciding factor and often dictates the conditions of work. There must also be a broad framework which benefits the students. However, the tighter the framework, the more difficult it is to work and adapt freely. Another participant asked about the element of student feedback in Lithuania, whether there is a lack of such feedback and if this is the case, whether this is considered to be a problem. In reply it was confirmed that this is in fact seen as a problem, but as a temporary one. This is because feedback depends on the element of trust between the students and teachers. The institutions also rely on the student representative union which actively participates within this process. Moreover, all course programmes are monitored by programme committees and student representatives are also involved at this level. The main problem encountered is that student representatives change very often and thus, university officials have to re-build a new relationship of trust with the newly elected student representatives.

### **3.3 Curricula with Integrated Mobility Abroad**

#### **Ms. Raimonda Markeviciene, Head of International Programs and Relations Office, University of Vilnius, Lithuania**

Ms. Markeviciene started her presentation by posing the question 'why mobility?' to the audience and continued by assessing the implications of mobility for both the educational institution and the country itself. The academic issues include matters such as curriculum development, personal developments, teaching and research cooperation, research projects, standards of quality, mobility as a tool for internationalization and structural changes within the institution. These may of course be linked with transversal issues, namely: intercultural and international understanding; the promotion of an institution and a country; the development of society and; the tolerance of cultural diversity. Nonetheless, one must recognize the obstacles which are hindering student mobility in this day and age. The main issues are those of:

- Lack of institutional perception, strategy and policy on internationalisation;
- Rigid input based curricula;
- Recognition;
- Lack of national language policies;
- Insular mentality predominant at national, institutional and departmental levels; and
- Lack of tight academic ties with colleagues from abroad.

The quality culture and the mobility culture have been identified as two cultures that do not live without each other. The European University Association defines the quality culture as an organizational culture that intends to enhance quality permanently that is characterised by two distinct elements:

1. Cultural/psychological element of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitment towards quality; and
2. A structural/managerial element with defined processes that enhance quality and aim at coordinating individual effort.

On the other hand, the mobility culture provides further attention to outcomes. In fact, the academic mobility culture reflects the possibility of students and teachers to move between different institutions for the development of mind, attitudes, behavioural patterns as well as institutional mind-sets and structures.

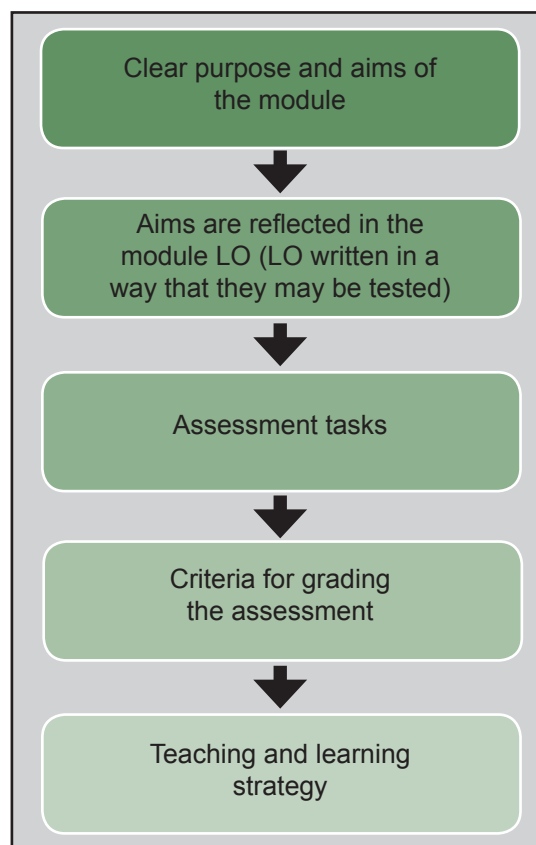
This presentation is based on the following two projects carried out in Lithuania; the MOCCA project – Model for Core Curricula with Integrated Mobility Abroad (2006) and the JOIMAN project – Joint Degree Management and Administration Network (2008).

<b>MOCCA - model for core curricula with integrated mobility abroad (2006)</b>	<b>JOIMAN - Joint Degree Management and Administration Network (2008)</b>
<p><b>Structure:</b></p> <p><b>I. Group of Experts (7 experts - Germany, UK, Finland, Lithuania)</b></p> <p><b>II. Pilot study programme - Public Health (9 partners - Estonia, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, England and Scotland)</b></p> <p><b>Coordinated by DAAD</b></p>	<p><b>Partnership:</b></p> <p>15 European universities (coordinator - Bologna university)</p> <p>3 EM NCP</p> <p><b>Plan:</b></p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> year - collection and analysis of data on JP in Europe - 2 online questionnaires, study visits and interviews collection of JP agreement samples</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> year - Joint PhD; JP with non-EU countries - self-evaluation, study visits and interviews</p>
<p>Copies of brochures are available in English from DAAD: <a href="mailto:bologna@daad.de">bologna@daad.de</a></p>	<p>JOIMAN website: <a href="http://www.joiman.eu">www.joiman.eu</a></p>

The notions of 'competences' and 'learning outcomes' are frequently confused by students and academics. Competences are dynamic combinations of: cognitive and metacognitive skills; knowledge and understanding; interpersonal, intellectual and practical skills; ethical values and attitudes. These are usually dictated by the job market and societal needs and described as 'property' which students take after the learning process. Learning outcomes are statements of what the learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after the completion of the process of learning. These are expressed through competences and show the level of the developed competence. Learning outcomes show the requirements to obtain credits, are formulated by academics and have to be tested.

Ms. Markeviciene proceeded to discuss three types of curricular forms of mobility. These are:

- Type I: a full semester mobility window during which a student may follow any number of modules at the host institution adding up to 30 credits. Thus, the semester is counted and accredited as a whole.
- Type II: a full semester, whereby the mobility module is not taught but assessed as independent work by either the home or host institution. The development of the module is a process in itself. A module is defined as a course unit in a system where each course unit carries the same number of credits or a multiple thereof (ECTS). The clear purpose and aims of the module must be provided and reflected in the module's learning outcomes. This is assessed within set criteria for grading the assessment accompanied by a teaching and learning strategy.



Despite the processes mentioned above, one must keep a clear view of the aims of mobility, which should be clearly reflected within the set learning outcomes of such. What are the aims of mobility?

- To enhance the learner's knowledge and understanding of their discipline by exposing them to a different system of learning and teaching;
- To foster awareness of the international dimension of knowledge;
- To give access to techniques, equipment, technologies, and expertise other than those available at their home institution;
- To improve competence in a second language;
- To provide context for the development of critical reflection capacity and self-directed learning;
- To become more resourceful, adaptable and self-confident;
- To develop awareness of and the ability to work within cultural diversity; and
- To prepare for work in novel situations and to take into account socio-cultural circumstances.

Possible assessment tasks for learning outcomes were also discussed and apart from the formal and traditional forms of assessments, ideas of case studies, keeping a reflective diary and the assessment of a second language acquisition were explored. The following are examples of such assessment tasks:

**Case Study:**

Write a case study or prepare and deliver an oral presentation in the home institution that:

- Explains one particular feature of the way in which the discipline is taught in comparison to the home institution; and
- Evaluates the relative effectiveness of that feature.

**Reflective Diary:**

Keep a reflective diary that:

- Records weekly challenges and opportunities of living and studying in the host country; and
- Sums up conclusions about the personal and professional value of the experience.



**Second Language Acquisition:**

Acquisition of the second language could be assessed:

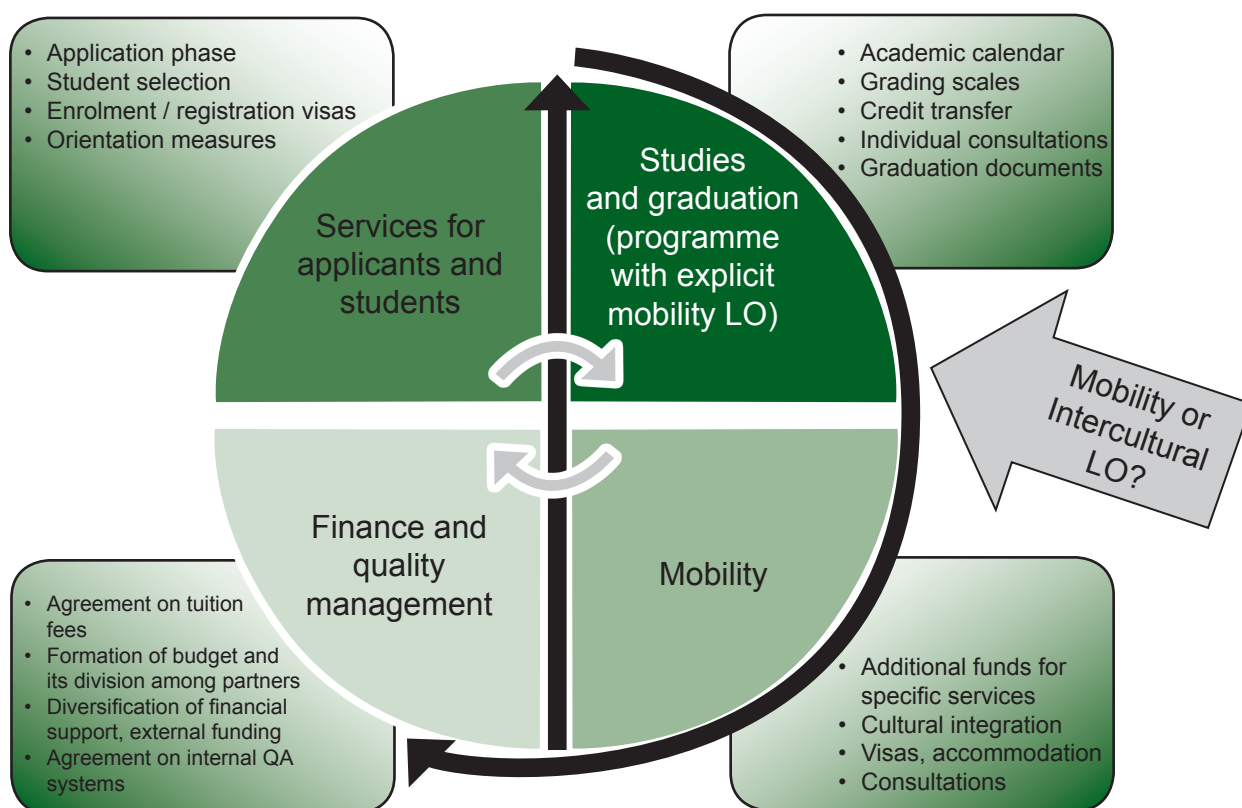
- a. Directly by testing the learner at the beginning and end of mobility; and
- b. Indirectly by providing a case study written in the second language or performance in the course.

Furthermore, mobility also depends on the types of partnerships between the educational institutions. There may be a closed partnership with identified, well known partners/host institutions whereby mobility learning outcomes may be assessed at home or at the host institutions. On the other hand, there may be an open partnership with any institution that offers related courses or modules which may be recognized by the home institution. The student is free to find and choose the host institution and the mobility learning outcomes are assessed at the home institution.

- Type III (of the curricula form of mobility) includes: a full semester in which the learning outcomes can most easily be achieved abroad and are designed into each module which the learner has to study at the host institution.

Joint degree programmes require the highest form of mobility because it involves student mobility, teacher mobility and virtual mobility through distance learning or e-learning. A joint programme is mutually developed by two or more institutions, leading to the award of a joint degree, a double degree and other double qualifications. The most frequent and popular joint programme models are: course programmes, trip programmes, bilateral mobility and intensive residential modules. The components of the implementation process of joint programmes consist of the mobility element, the services for applicants and students, studies and graduation, finance, and quality management.

Ultimately, success factors have been identified for programmes with integrated mobility. These may be categorized as external success factors, institutional level success factors and programme level success factors. External success factors involve: general values and attitudes in society; the demand of generic competences fostered by mobility by the labour market and; the availability of grants and loans.



Institutional level success factors include: the visions and realistic efforts of the said institution; the level of internalizations; the framework for recognition; the administrative framework for study process support; student support and counselling services. Moreover, programme level success factors include the importance of committed staff and transparent information on the curricula and mobility period, student selection criteria, motivation and support, financial support of mobility, proper marketing strategy and the monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

### **3.4 Question Time and Discussion – Chaired by Dr. Philip von Brockdorff, Chairman, NCHE**

Dr. Philip von Brockdorff commenced the discussion by emphasizing that mobility promotes benchmarking, quality and student empowerment. Both the University of Malta and MCAST are currently emphasizing the vital importance of learning outcomes. One of the participants also held that when it comes to implementing SCL, other methods of assessment and learning outcomes, the real stumbling block is really the issue of assessment in schools. Unfortunately, at the end of schooling, one has to sit for formal examinations. Thus, teachers direct their teaching towards finishing the syllabus of the particular topics to enable the students to sit for the said examinations. In reply it was agreed and reiterated that the hard way is to talk about methodology, break everything down and change mentality. Pupils are being taught how to take tests. Unfortunately, this change takes time.

One of the speakers enquired on whether one is referring to mobility for under-graduate or post-graduate students. In reply it was emphasized that research 'has' to be mobile and therefore, there are more Master's programmes with an element of mobility than under-graduate course programmes. A participant also outlined that one starts learning from a very young age and not once embarking in Higher Education studies. Unless the educational journey is well planned and carefully implemented from the very beginning, the country shall be wasting its resources. School leavers fail because compulsory education is not carefully planned. Are we teaching basic competences twice because of lack of planning? We should really be reminded of student individual learning. Another speaker also commented that a rational human approach must be taken when countries decide to carry out or not to carry out some projects by applying for ESF funding and by assessing not simply the costs of doing something but also the costs of not doing something.

One of the speakers held that in order to increase participation rates in Higher Education, education must be looked at in a holistic manner. There are categories of students who are not even sitting for SEC examinations. This must be looked at in greater detail whilst also reviewing the MATSEC system.

## **4. Round table discussion, sharing of expertise and good practices between International HEIs and policy makers on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning**

### **4.1 Ms. Milica Popovic, ESU, France**

Ms. Popovic thanked the National Commission for Higher Education for the invitation and gave an overview of her background and involvement with the European Students' Union. There have been a lot of doubts and questioning regarding what is really meant by Student Centred Learning and the expectations it fosters. The project T4SCL (Time for Student Centred Learning) incorporated different streams and tried to build upon the capacities of student unions and teachers to be able to deal with this new approach to learning. The policy input within the European Higher Education Area was also one of the aims of the project.

The first phase dealt with research outcomes which consisted of a survey analysis to assess the attitudes of student and staff unions towards SCL. The outcomes were mainly a positive view on the idea of SCL, whilst it was expressed that little is carried out within national policies. A number of barriers to change were also identified such as: attitudes, reform fatigue, unfavourable working conditions and lack of funding. In the meantime, there is a great need for the cooperation of stakeholders, further internal work, professional development and the avoidance of a consumerist approach. The desk research provided an insight into theory and practice. This was conducted by gathering existing data to set the basis for the discussion within the main document, which was to deal with four key components:

- Discussion of the definition of SCL:
- Assessment of the conditions that need to be in place;
- Examination of the professional development and training needs; and
- Analysis of student perceptions and attitudes.

The main idea behind the SCL approach is to 'teach not what but how to think' in a constructive manner. Once again, identified challenges in this regard include deteriorating conditions of academics, loss of control of academics over academic issues and the emphasized importance of guidance and counselling. A number of events were organized in order to receive additional feedback to the research being carried out.

The Toolkit focused on the principles and definitions surrounding SCL. The approach is an ongoing reflexive process and is surely not a one-size-fits-all solution. Students have different learning styles, needs and interests, experiences and background knowledge. Choice is central and students need to have control over their learning. Students should be enabled to think and not be told what to think. Ultimately, learning needs to be founded on cooperation and trust between the students and the academic staff.

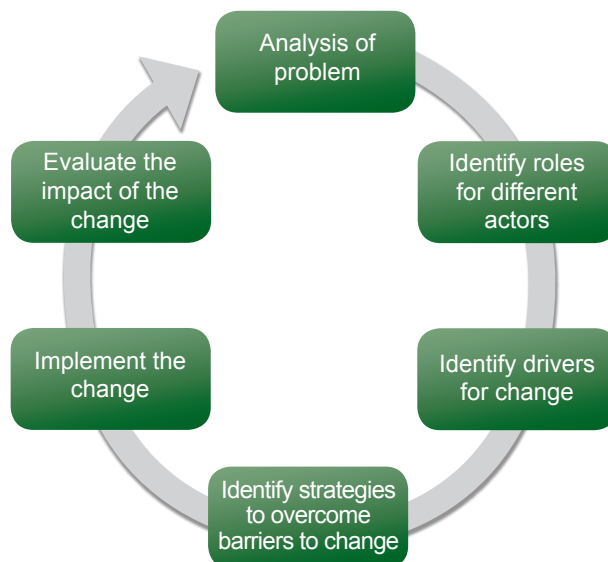
The Toolkit attempts to define Student Centred Learning as:

*Student-Centred Learning represents both a mindset 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 characterized 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.*

The most important element of this definition is that there is no prescribed method of teaching. The other element is

the communication and trust being built between the students and teachers and the students amongst themselves. The benefits of SCL are listed as being a new, interesting and challenging role for teachers; a potential solution to the massification of Higher Education problems; having a positive impact on working conditions; increasing motivation for learners by making them an integral part of the academic community in due consideration of their needs; improving the status of the teaching profession; enhancing quality; and fostering a lifelong learning culture. This checklist and policy cycle is instrumental in the analysis of the problem, bringing about change and subsequently evaluating the impact of such change.

## CHECKLIST and POLICY CYCLE



Undoubtedly, teachers have a leading role to play within this process. The role of teachers is that of assessing student body and student motivation, choosing teaching and learning methods and student assessment methods. The proper use of course evaluations and the use of information technologies are also crucial elements. Very often, students fill in assessment forms and expect change to take place. Thus, it is important that the staff receiving the feedback forms address the students' suggestions and recommendations. On the other hand, the role of HEIs must complement these efforts by making proper use of learning outcomes, effecting changes in curricula structure and design, ensuring international quality assurance of programmes and courses, formulating proper professional academic development policies; making use of IT and modern learning resources and promoting a SCL culture and supporting SCL friendly policies.

This movement has also suffered from common misconceptions as people have very different concepts about SCL. Does it mean anything in practice? Can only rich HEIs afford it? Does it mean that teachers are no longer needed? How can this be applied to subjects such as physics? Is IT needed to implement it? The Bologna Process is the ideal opportunity to start reforming European Higher Education systems. The use of the Toolkit is to disseminate the SCL principles and benefits to a wide audience, to use as support for argumentation of advocacy efforts and to use as a base for further research. Ultimately, *You cannot teach a man anything. You can only help him discover it within himself*, Galileo Galilei

### 4.2 Prof. Valerie Sollars, Faculty of Education-Dean, University of Malta

When dealing with SCL, there are a number of contradictory/paradox situations, which academic staff must address. Prof. Sollars explained that everyone mentions that students need to be reflective thinkers and problem solvers. However, how can this be done with a class of 100 students? This is a debate between trust and power. How can students be trusted to make their own choices and take their own individual paths?

Malta must seek to promote SCL in a culture which for a very long time, has spoon fed children. What is valued? What is culturally being promoted? And what is recognized as learning? Are children or students allowed to question or query? If this does not start at a very young age, a SCL approach definitely cannot take place when students are already 18 years of age or older. Henceforth, one must address this issue in all levels of education.

#### **4.3 Ms. Rosetta Thornhill, Deputy Director, Institute of Tourism Studies**

Ms. Thornhill emphasized that the implications of students' non-participation must be addressed. One must also recognize that elements such as, an inappropriate attitude by the lecturers, brings about a number of implications upon students, which may lead to a change in behaviour and a lack of interest by the student. This may consequently, lead to a number of students dropping out. One of the consequences may also be truancy. At present however, statistics on truancy and Higher Education are still lacking on a national level. At the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), SCL is being provided by asking students to choose their own paths within their course programme, such as the sphere they would like to work in and whether they would like to go abroad on internships. Ms. Thornhill also mentioned that ITS is currently undergoing a curriculum revamp and issues related to SCL are seriously being taken into consideration.

#### **4.4 Mr. Adrian Mamo, Director, Institute of Tourism Studies**

Mr. Mamo confirmed that the Institute of Tourism Studies is currently undergoing major changes and the SCL approach is being injected within this process. He also pointed out that it is very challenging to implement a transactional course of curriculum within a vocational perspective. Subsequently Mr. Mamo referred to terminology which was used throughout the conference such as 'input', 'output' and 'outcomes' and remarked that these terms are usually utilized within the industrial and commercial spheres. Therefore, this marks a major shift within Higher Education. HEIs are shouldered with the responsibility of developing and preparing individuals for the demands of society in general. In a certain way, this is becoming worrying as the educational field is becoming industry driven and this will hinder the full and proper implementation of SCL. Quality assurance must also be incorporated in the academic field and throughout the full structures of the institutions.

The know-how of the industry is still essential because this experience provides the technical skills. Nonetheless, especially when it comes to the recruitment of lecturers, sometimes, despite their technical skills, they do not have adequate pedagogical training. Therefore, HEIs must provide them with these skills. All of the issues, which have been discussed during this seminar, are challenges to SCL because the latter requires a change in culture and mentality. Mr. Mamo concluded by stating that hopefully SCL does not become another buzz word, which does not lead to good results.

#### **4.5 Mr. Carl Grech, Bologna Expert, President, KSU**

Maltese students are brought up in an educational environment which does not put them in a position to think for themselves. It is very beneficial that such issues are being discussed during this conference; however it is equally important to address this issue in fora focusing on primary and secondary education.

In May 2010, KSU carried out a study on quality assurance, part of which focused on obtaining feedback from students. Over 550 students participated in this study. The majority were Faculty of Law students (17%),

followed by Faculty of Arts students (13%), Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy students (10%) and Junior College students (8%).<sup>2</sup>

No	Question	Agree	NA	Disagree
1	Following an increase in the salary of lecturers, there was an increase in the quality of education being offered by the University.	14%	11%	75%
2	Lecturers follow the outline of the study-unit description and assess students according to the method of assessment indicated on eSIMS.	69%	2%	28%
3	In general the amount of work involved with a particular study-unit is compatible to the number of ECTS assigned.	37%	3%	60%
4	Lecturers are knowledgeable about the subject.	88%	1%	11%
5	Lecturers are well prepared for lectures.	73%	1%	26%
6	Lecturers treat students in a fair and equal way.	67%	1%	32%
7	Lecturers are available to help students with any difficulties.	71%	2%	27%
8	The delivery of lectures is adequate and lecturers are good public speakers.	57%	1%	42%
9	Lectures are well delivered.	58%	1%	41%
10	Lecturers are punctual for lectures.	54%	1%	45%
11	Lecturers use the appropriate resources and material for lectures.	63%	2%	35%
12	Lectures are understandable and stimulating.	43%	1%	56%
13	Lectures are intellectually challenging.	54%	2%	44%
14	Lectures are delivered in such a way that they encourage student participation.	36%	2%	62%
15	Lecturers inform students, prior to them missing a lecture, via email or mobile phone in a timely manner.	49%	2%	49%

Chapter 8 of the SCL Toolkit, which was produced by Education International, deals with the common misconceptions about SCL. This is a great synopsis of the student body's discussions as we strive to propose ways to tangibly tackle such obstacles. Moreover, SCL should actually require less contact hours as students are expected to carry out their own research and be more involved in their learning process. On the other hand,

<sup>2</sup> The full report may be found on [www.ksu.org.mt](http://www.ksu.org.mt)

teachers should be there to facilitate the said learning process. Stakeholders must strive to move towards a system where the provision of educational services is much more accountable. Undoubtedly, both students and lecturers must possess the necessary resources in order to carry this out. In theory, SCL should not require much more resources but at least, the basic and fundamental ones should be made readily available.

#### **4.6 Question Time and Discussion Chaired by Dr. Philip von Brockdorff, NCHE Chairman**

One of the speakers argued that there are a lot of good initiatives taking place in Malta's educational system. The professionals in the educational field are aware that the move towards learning-centeredness has started. However, it is important not to remove the teacher and put the student in the centre. The centre is the learning process and this only will ensure that SCL is not simply a buzz word. One of the participants held that SCL has to be an orchestrated cultural change as it is also very difficult to change the perception of students vis-à-vis that of lecturers. Every stakeholder within the learning process is being challenged to move away from the set models and restructure the educational journey to be based on processes. Another participant enquired on whether there are any available statistics to show that a SCL approach delivers better results than the ones proved by the current system. Teachers are arguing that their established methods are tried and tested and have reaped good results, thus statistics will help to combat this idea. In reply, a case study was mentioned which took place in Holland where personally tailored programmes founded on SCL were tried out with school leavers and successful results were achieved.

On the other hand, another participant held that academics and professionals in the education sector must be very clear at what they want to achieve and thus. SCL is something dynamic and must be adaptable. It is therefore, a question of attitude from both sides of the learning process. In reply, it was argued that SCL is not simply an issue of content and the curricula presented to students, but all the Bologna Process lines must be linked together in a holistic manner. SCL is not simply about the knowledge imparted by the lecturer, but consists of the whole learning experience which should be set as a priority.

One of the speakers stated that there were ways of implementing SCL in big groups of students. Teachers should be informed about these processes and new learning methods from the very beginning, so that they may be entrusted to implement SCL at lower levels of education, whilst still at the start of their teaching careers. SCL is all about helping students become active citizens who are capable of critical thinking, have their own autonomous reflections and problem solving skills. Ultimately the panel discussion was concluded by emphasizing that one has to look at the intrinsic motivation of the student and the job satisfaction of the teacher himself/herself. These are both important elements, which may serve to enrich the learning experience for both the student and the lecturer.





**DAY 2 – Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2011**

## **5. Introduction and Review of Day 1**

### **5.1 Introduction - Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator**

Dr. Calleja welcomed the participants for the second day of the conference and invited Ms. Dimech to give a summary of the discussion points raised during the first day.

### **5.2 Brief overview of Day 1 - Ms. Debbie Lora Dimech, Commission Officer, NCHE**

Ms. Dimech held that the key points of the debate throughout the first day of the conference could be summarized as the following:

- Teaching is at the service of students and not the institutions;
- There is no one-size-fits-all solution to SCL as every institution is different;
- Equitable access to HEIs is of prime importance; and
- Quality assurance of HEIs is essential.

SCL is not static but a dynamic concept which develops by time. This process is dependant upon many factors, amongst which are: the value placed on learning; the consideration of methods of learning and; the capabilities achieved. Students should be prepared to be active citizens and distinct individuals. The critical issues remain those of:

- *The teachers' role* – This has been changing with time, however the role and functions of the teacher remain as a point of discussion;
- *The access into Higher Education* – To what extent may access into Higher Education be allowed without the necessary competences? Will students eventually cope? The lower part of Higher Education is equally important. These two are related as the teacher is only able to deliver as per tools and resources provided.
- *Quality assurance, recognition, joint degrees and the social dimension* – All these elements are incorporated in SCL, each within a different perspective. In Malta, student participation in Higher Education is not very high. This is an issue which the National Commission for Higher Education is working on by compiling information about students leaving Higher Education on a yearly basis.
- *The processes that are being used in addressing the approach of SCL, as against the frameworks which already exist* - Realistically, HEIs cannot exist outside of a legal framework. Resisting frameworks is a losing battle; as these are forms of discipline that we, as policy makers, impose upon ourselves in order not to mistrust each other.
- *Assessment procedures* – Which ones are working best? Do assignments give an indication of the competences that students obtain? Best practice leads to standardization and standards lead to learning outcomes.
- *E-Learning process* – Is this conducive to a SCL approach? Some state that the process of e-learning is not student centred because there is a lack of socialization, contact and communication. This is a very important issue to be resolved.



## 6. Presentations and Informal Discussion

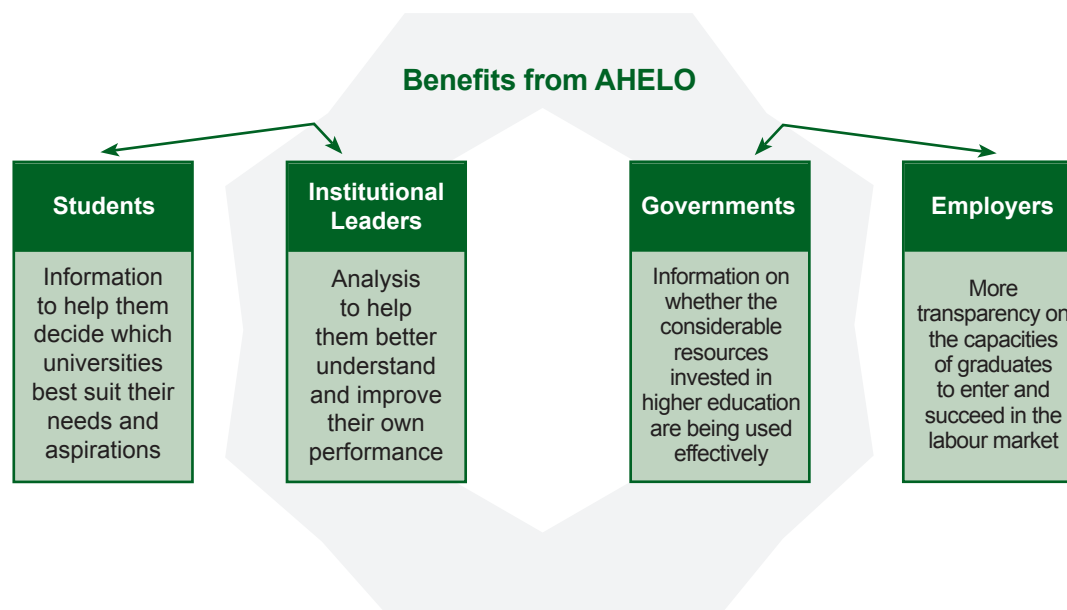
### 6.1 Enhancing Quality of E-Learning Programmes to Foster Student-Centred Education - Dr. Helene Kamensky, Austria

Dr. Kamensky started by saying that her presentation shall focus on the paradigm shift towards an outcome-based education model; e-learning as a mighty tool to foster learning outcomes and; the enhancing impact of e-learning with due consideration to the pedagogical and psychological factors.

Universities are undergoing a radical transformation in the delivery of education and thus a paradigm shift is taking place, resulting in a total change in the way academics think. Thus, there is a move from the traditional educational paradigm towards a new educational paradigm that is output oriented. The traditional educational paradigm is input oriented and focuses on teaching and instruction with qualifications primarily described in terms of length of study and type of institution attended. On the other hand, the new educational paradigm is output oriented and focuses on learning and students' accomplishments. Qualifications are described by learning outcomes that is, what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of the learning process. As a profound impact of the Bologna/Tuning on Higher Education worldwide, curricula and educational programmes are nowadays being shaped around learning outcomes as a global trend.

Dr. Kamensky referred to the Tuning project in the USA<sup>3</sup> whereby learning outcomes are considered as 'the only true measure of quality in Higher Education'. The AHELO project conducted by OECD also tackles the issue of learning outcomes, within its study entitled 'The Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes, 2010-2012, Testing student and university performance globally'. AHELO is a tool for:

- Universities: to assess and improve their teaching.
- Students: to make better choices in selecting institutions
- Policy-makers: to make sure that the considerable amounts spent on Higher Education are spent well.
- Employers: to know if the skills of the graduates entering the job market match their needs.<sup>4</sup>



Fostering learning outcomes poses a wide range of challenges for universities as:

<sup>3</sup> Tuning USA, Lumina Foundation for Education, 2009

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.oecd.org>

*The creation and implementation of learning outcomes is a highly complex and difficult process ... Learning outcomes are part of a massive reform package that spans enormous structural and process changes from macro to micro levels, encompassing qualifications frameworks, quality assurance, institutional and curriculum reform.<sup>5</sup>*

Moreover, the effective shift to learning outcomes requires a systematic and strategic transformation of the educational paradigm at an institution as a whole. The focus on learning outcomes also bears implications for universities such as the institutional commitment to placing learning at the forefront of the university's agenda, a comprehensive long-term strategy for implementing complex and multidimensional institutional strategic change, the creation of the learner-centred educational environment and the efficient instructional design and delivery.

This presentation defined e-learning as 'training delivered on a computer by way of CD-ROM, internet, or intranet with the following features:

- Includes content relevant to the learning objective;
- Uses instructional methods such as practice to enhance learning;
- Uses media elements such as words and pictures to deliver the content and methods;
- May be instructor-led or designed for self-paced individual study; and
- Builds new knowledge and skills linked to individual learning goals or improved organizational performance.<sup>6</sup>

This attempted definition places emphasis on learning outcomes, whilst the goal of e-learning is to build job transferable knowledge, skills and competences in order to help individuals achieve personal learning objectives to perform their jobs in an efficient way. E-Learning is also unique in its own way by providing efficient practice with automated tailored feedback and the integration of collaboration with self-study. Furthermore, unique instructional methods to e-learning include adaptive instruction i.e. the dynamic adjustment of instruction based on learning progress and the use of simulation and games. Nonetheless, there are barriers to the effective implementation of e-learning, namely organizational barriers due to the fact that some institutions are not properly prepared to support the e-learning effort. On the other hand, an institution might be investing solely in the software and hardware without the institutional commitment to enhance educational quality and service. Others might encounter technical and financial problems and inefficient instructional programmes.

Summarily, e-learning can significantly increase learning and teaching productivity, however it can also fall short of its potential due to organizational, technical, financial and pedagogical shortcomings. E-Learning efficiency may be increased in building blocks by effective instructional methods that support psychological processes of learning and a systematic approach. To be effective, e-courses are to meet human psychological learning requirements<sup>7</sup> as an efficient e-learning course focuses on the process of learning rather than on the process of transmitting facts from teacher to student. Based on a cognitive theory of how people learn, such courses should equip students with the necessary tools and resources which enable the students to construct their own knowledge.

The knowledge construction approach shows that people are not passive recipients of information but active sense makers as they engage in cognitive processing during learning. The goal of efficient instruction is to engage learners in cognitive processing that goes beyond remembering presented information. The learning model reflects four principles:

- i. Dual Channels – People have separate channels for processing visual/pictorial and auditory/verbal material;

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<sup>5</sup> S. Adam, UK Bologna Expert, Learning Outcomes Current Developments in Europe – Update on the Issues and Applications of Learning Outcomes associated with the Bologna Process, Edinburgh, Scotland, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Based on Clark, R.C. & Mayer, R.E., 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Based on the research study on cognitive learning processes and methods conducted by Ruth C. Clark & Richard E. Meyer.

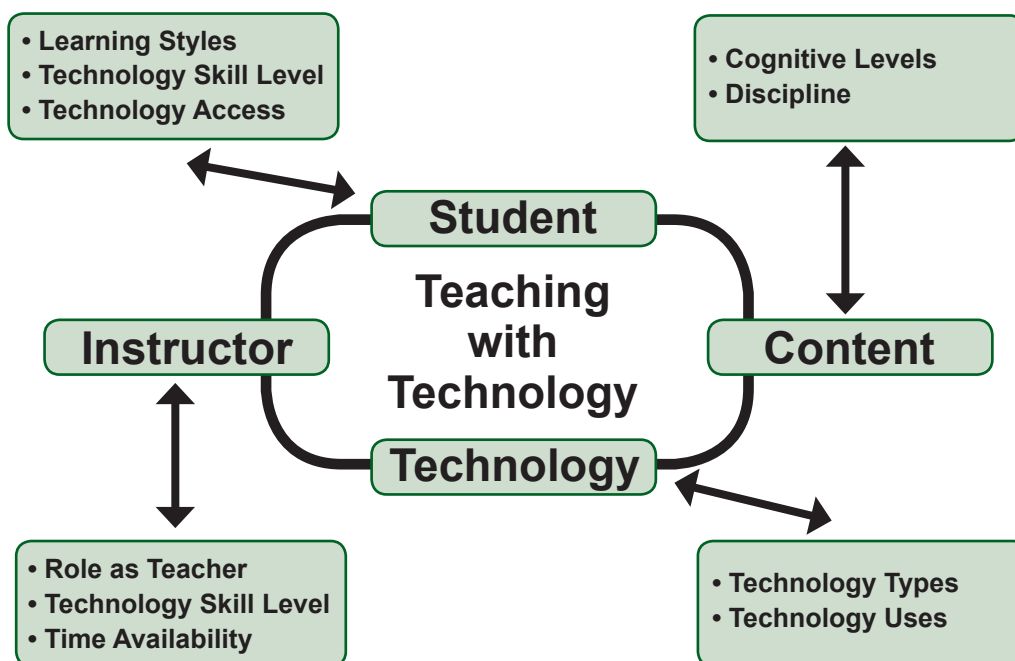
## Student-Centred Learning A Bologna Process International Conference

- ii. Limited Capacity – People can actively process only a few pieces of information in each channel at a time;
- iii. Active Processing – Learning occurs when people engage in appropriate cognitive processing during learning; and
- iv. Transfer – New knowledge and skills must be retrieved from long-term memory during performance.

Learning from e-lessons relies on four key processes namely that: the learner must focus on key graphics and words; the learner must rehearse this information in working memory, the limited working memory capacity must not be overloaded and learning must be transferable. The design of e-lessons can support active processing or block it, depending on the kind of instructional methods being used. The efficient promotion of e-learning is based upon the following principles:

- *Multimedia Principle* – the use of words and graphics;
- *Continuity Principle* – the alignment of words to corresponding graphics;
- *Morality Principle* – the presentation of words as audio narration instead of on-screen text;
- *Redundancy Principle* – the explanation of visuals with words in audio or text but not both;
- *Coherence Principle* – the addition of interesting material can hurt learning;
- *Personalized Principle* – the use of a conversational style and virtual coaches;
- *Segmenting Principle* – the management of complexity by breaking a lesson into parts; and
- *Pre-training Principle* – the provision of pre-training in the names and characteristics of the key concepts in a lesson.

Subsequently, one must consider certain factors such as course content, the instructor, the learners' differences and the use and functions of technology before bringing technology on board. By developing course content, clarity is essential in the teaching strategy being adopted and the goals that are set for student learning. The overuse of technology could also be a consequence as it can depress learning. On the other hand, the under use of technology can decelerate the desired learning outcomes.



In her concluding remarks, Dr. Kamensky held that e-learning has a huge potential to foster student-centred education and to enhance productivity in learning. The goal is to avoid enervative, endless, or empty e-learning and to implement effective, efficient and engaging e-learning. The efficient implementation of e-learning requires transformative rather than sustaining use of technology. Learning technology should enhance opportunities for HEIs to innovate in instructional design and delivery.

## **6.2 Question Time and Discussion-Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator**

One of the speakers held that the main message conveyed in the last presentation is that when one talks about e-learning in the context of education, what is being referred to is a very attractive and resourceful tool for teachers. Moreover, e-learning can be very intensive, in the sense of a repeated and addictive process. The issue of speed is also to be considered. What used to take a day or two to write or research, nowadays takes an hour or two by using the internet. Furthermore, effectiveness is also necessary. How effective is this for the students' and the teachers' quality of life? Currently, there are many more students sitting for tests than the number of students who actually attend lectures. This is a reality which academics must face, as students are not always relying on the teacher to learn. This is a transformation process which should be placed within a transformational approach.

A member of the audience shared two examples of how effective e-learning can be with teachers and students. During the academic year 2009/2010, MCAST designed a programme for qualified persons who were not teachers. One of the tasks was that of designing a module about e-learning. This involved 94 members of staff. Although there was a lot of resistance, this module was the most popular and some of them have embarked on their first experience of sharing their knowledge in class. Furthermore, the first vocational degrees were launched in 2009 with the help of Franhauser. The main obstacle was that of developing the curriculum and course programme. It was discovered that e-learning between the Franhauser lecturers and MCAST's staff was the best way to do it, by delivering 500 slides for each module. One could have seen the importance of dialogue between the two parts before the lecturers' arrival. E-Learning is very important and cannot be ignored however it needs to be part of a blended method of working and should not be placed on its own.

One of the speakers enquired on how universities should go about a systematic change in taking on e-learning methods. In reply it was explained that if the implementation methods not placed in the broader context and do not take into consideration the attitudes of management, the governance structure and the culture of the HEI, this approach cannot be successful. A systematic approach in enhancing the efficiency of e-learning is a must.

Moreover another speaker held that the intrinsic motivation of students when using technology may facilitate the whole learning process of the individuals. Many individuals associate e-learning with the Moodle platform. This is only a tool. A number of lecturers at ITS are using this platform, however there is also a misperception that utilizing this platform simply consists of uploading documents. The e-learning process is much more than this. Unfortunately, there is also a stigma against gaming for educational purposes. This misconception should be eliminated. ITS is also participating in a project called MODES, which targets students' soft skills. The next step is to utilize technologies in collaboration with serious games to explore how these may be injected in the curriculum. Another speaker agreed and confirmed that this depends on how skilful the teacher is in using these tools. Thus, the teachers' skills affect the way these tools are used to render them effective.

Another speaker argued that essentially the teacher has to engage within the students' process to achieve and reach the learning outcomes. Should it be a facilitator role? Of course, this also depends on the class and individuals being taught. The role of the teacher is still crucial but this depends on the resources, tools and time provided to the teacher to explore innovative teaching methods in a transformative way to help the student achieve the learning outcomes. The University should also provide support and incentives for teachers. Ultimately it was emphasized that e-learning could be used as a common language amongst students with mixed abilities. Teachers should make the best use of this valuable platform.

## **6.3 Various Teaching Methods**

### **Ms. Bernie Mizzi, Bologna Expert, Malta**

Ms. Mizzi started her presentation by insisting that her aim is to try and engage the participants as much as possible. In preparation, she tried to find out more about her audience as prior knowledge is important when it comes to evoking motivation. How can motivation and assessment actually impact upon the quality of education? If we take McClelland's Iceberg model and hone in on the Achievement Motive, when this motive is evoked, a person is concerned with outperforming someone else, when that someone else represents excellence; meeting or surpassing a self-imposed standard of excellence; accomplishing something new, unique or innovative; and being involved in the long-term planning/advancement of his/her career.

A video clip was then shown of Daniel Pink on motivation, which put together all these ideas of how we should be changing our learning and what our models should be like. This clip may be viewed on:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6XAPnuFjJc>.

Undoubtedly, the social context makes a difference to learning. One would suppose that whilst students are in Higher Education, this should be intrinsic as it is no longer compulsory. Nonetheless, what sort of impact does this have on HEIs? Why is it beneficial for a lecturer to know that the students are going to be motivated with mastering skills and having a purpose? How can we be affective if we don't even know what motivates us? If I do not care about the learning that I am supposed to be bringing about, then I will not be doing it well. We need to look at motivation very seriously.

The next part of the presentation dealt with assessment. Lin Norton states that:

*What research has shown is that how we assess our students is one of the most powerful influences on what approach to learning they will take.<sup>8</sup>*

Research has shown that students are not very interested in the content but they are very focused on how to achieve a grade A, thus there is a lot of attention of the strategic methods of assessment.

#### **Discussion Points:**

How do your students know what they are supposed to do in assignments?

- Do fellow lecturers in your subject all mark similarly?
- Do lecturers share the same understanding of assessment criteria as:
  - i. Their students?
  - ii. Their fellow lecturers in the same subject?
- Is your written feedback generally consistent with the assessment criteria?
- Do your students understand your feedback?
- How do you know?

This should be carried out between the lecturers and the students so that the latter will exercise a sense of ownership of their work and assignments. Regarding examinations, there are innovative ways through which the capabilities of students are assessed.

Even in examinations, you can go about in a formative way to get to that position. This depends on co-construction between all parties. We should be using assessment as a tool to bring about SCL. Teachers will not change until they know that their methods are being approved of. This needs to be carried out in a systematic way by consulting all stakeholders and approaching the system in a holistic manner.

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<sup>8</sup> Learning, Teaching and Assessing in Higher Education (2007).

Teachers must also be aware that some students need the preparation, narrative and language in order to adjust to these new changes. There might be the assumption that students want to move towards SCL but we need to ensure that the student body is ready to take on these challenges. Some direction is extremely helpful but we must always leave some space for self-direction. Students need to express what they are aiming for by presenting their work.

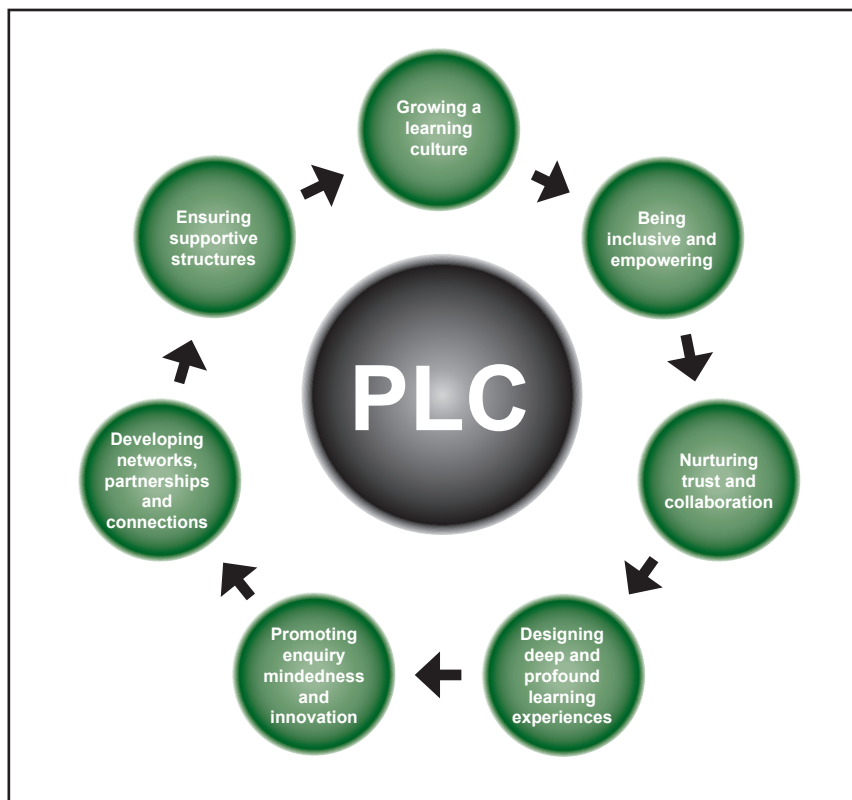
The third element is that of quality learning. The following discussion points were posed to the participants.

### Discussion Points

What is quality learning? Is it about:

- Providing a transformational experience?
- Understanding the subject?
- Demonstrating your knowledge/mastery of a specific subject?
- Learning to learn?
- Thinking about the world, yourself and the discipline in a different way?
- Having an easy and pleasurable experience?
- Performing well and achieving high grades?
- Acquiring skills that will aid employability?

Subsequently, we are now trying to move towards Professional Learning Communities (PLC), which community is defined as an inclusive and mutually supportive group of people with a collaborative, reflective and growth-oriented approach towards investigating and learning more about their practice in order to improve students' learning.



Ultimately, college graduates need to demonstrate:

*Creativity, problem-solving capability, ... the ability to adapt, innovate, synthesize data, communicate effectively, learn independently and work in teams.*<sup>9</sup>

9 Arne Duncan U.S. Secretary of State.



## **6.4 Question Time and Discussion - Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator**

It was held that this presentation was indeed a very interesting one as the motivating factor with teachers is success and this is also built upon preparation. Then there is the institution itself which also has to be motivational. Alongside these concepts, there are existing issues of respect and recognition by the institution, which provides and defines the learning environment. One must also mention the relationship between students and parents because parents have a huge say in the children's education and the motivation here comes from the quality of education and the quality of life of the students. Summarily, in the content of what we teach and learn in schools, there has to be relevance to career orientation to what we expect people to do in 10-15 years from now. The last motivating indicator is then the labour market. An example is the I-gaming industry which is quite attractive to young people today. Thus, the labour market in many respects is a motivating factor because it looks at the production thereof and produces returns. Moreover, the link between learning outcomes and the description of assessment methods is fundamental as it enhances transparency between the students and teachers. Coherence within institutions is also very important. Surprising students is not ethical, fair or educational. Teachers are not there to see what students don't know but to assess what students have learned.

Another speaker argued that the concept of intrinsic motivation has been around since the 60s, however academics must accept that learning is not an easy process. All learners should accept that there is no easy way. Stakeholders in the education sector need to come up with a totally different system and perception. In reply it was reiterated that the system is in fact changing slowly but surely. Some changes are also being imposed due to legal frameworks.

One of the speakers held that transparency is being enhanced but experience shows that the same route cannot be used with every group of students. Thus, this is really about obtaining a balance between the formal requirements and what is happening in the classroom. In response it was acknowledged that it is very hard to follow the same routes and methods in every case of learning. It is important to care about the students. One also has to be committed to enabling a student to learn, whilst being creative in listening and finding ways to help the learning process. Finally, the most important issue is co-construction. It is thus easier if the mindset and preparation is much more serious. Regarding grading, it was confirmed that one has to make a distinction between students who have excelled and others who have not managed to do so, and therefore, still support structured grading. The most important point is to make the success criteria very clear and embed students in the assessment criteria. Additionally, further coordination and consultation is required between HEIs in order to obtain uniformity between institutions.

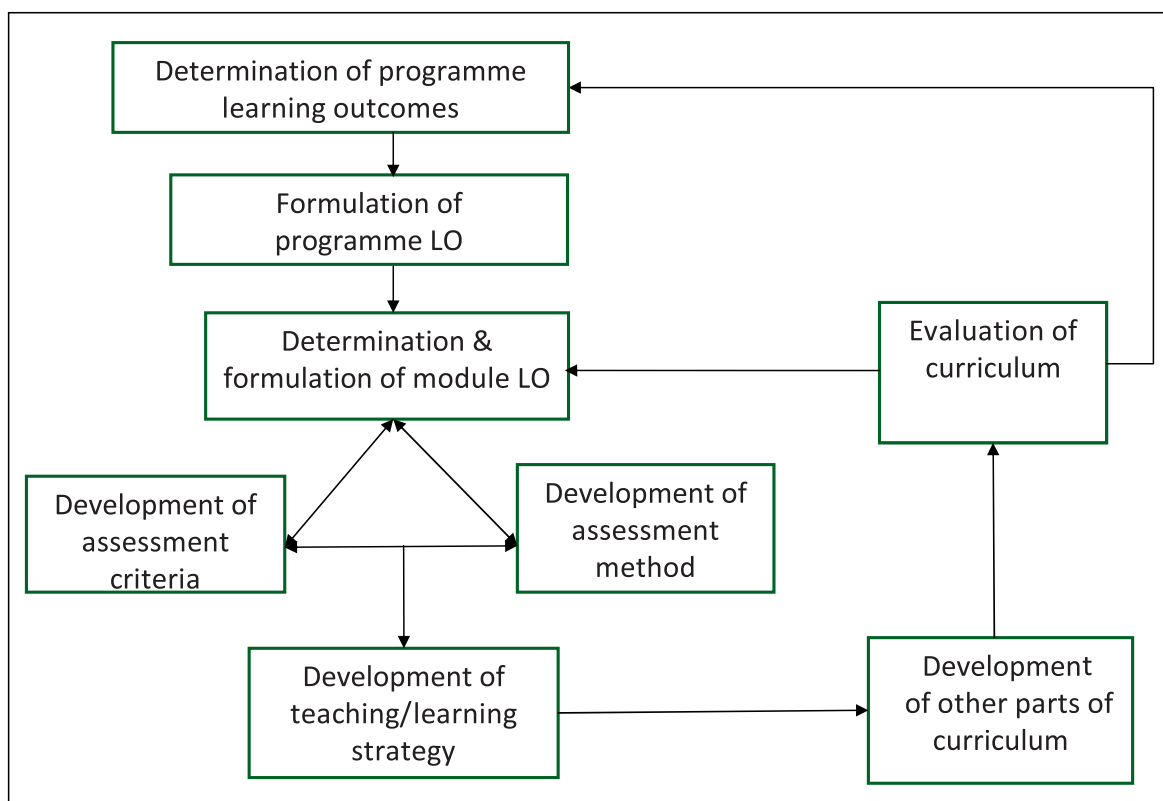


## 7. Round table discussion on the sharing of expertise and good practice between International HEIs and policy makers on the furthering of the creation of flexible learning paths for students

### 7.1 Ms. Nora Pileickiene, Centre for Quality of Studies, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

Ms. Pileickiene described learning outcomes as specific measurable achievements and requirements which set abilities to be acquired or developed by students regarding the cognitive, psychomotor and affective learning domains. The purpose of learning outcomes is based on the objectives for students and the background for recognition of the qualifications. They may also be used as tools for curriculum development and quality assurance alongside the relevant data for quality assessment and improvements. Furthermore, learning outcomes also vary in type, according to the content being taught. Some principles are precise in context and relating to uncontested concepts of skill or knowledge. Others are imprecise concepts (related to dynamic situations), some are contested by their very nature whilst some may be both imprecise and contested. One must also observe the relation between learning outcomes and the planning and the constructive alignment of a curriculum as indicated in the tables below.

Outcomes-based curriculum	Traditional approach
Learning Outcomes ↓ Assessment ↓ Content & Teaching Methods	Content ↓ Teaching Methods ↓ Assessment ↓ Learning Outcomes



Subsequently, Ms. Pileickiene referred to the project on the 'Renewal of Study Programmes' at Vytautas Magnus University, referring to the Principles of a Common European Higher Education Area (2010-2012), which is being conducted at her home university. The objectives of this project are:

- To prepare methodical tools for the renewal of study programmes;
- To provide courses for teachers' professional development; and
- To renew, evaluate and correct the study programmes at Vytautas Magnus University.

Nonetheless, the challenges identified throughout this project are the teachers' professional development in didactics, the follow up procedures and activities, duplication of stakeholders in programme committees and the data collection of alumni, amongst others.

## 7.2 Dr. Suzanne Gatt, Faculty of Education, University of Malta

Dr. Suzanne Gatt started her presentation by stating that flexible pathways between academic and vocational education have been discussed for quite some time. Reference to the promotion of accessibility to Higher Education has also been made in various occasions. However, flexibility within institutions is also important. How are students allowed to be flexible within the same programme of study? What is the state of flexibility between University, MCAST and ITS? An example of good practice in this regard is the possibility of entering the course programme leading to a Bachelor of Education offered by the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta to students who have obtained their BTEC qualification and one subject at advanced level.

10% of the students enrolled within the Faculty of Education are mature students and these make up 90% of the faculty's successful graduates. This means that there is a valid argument in favour of the recognition of informal and non-formal learning. The university does not yet enjoy an admission policy which recognizes informal and

non-formal learning but during these past years, a set of indicators have been discovered and are now being explored. Regarding mobility, there is an international commitment from the University of Malta towards students in helping them carry out a period of study within an international university. However, we need to work on dedicating much more attention to the importance of such experiences within faculties.

### **7.3 Ms. Christine Scholz, National Commission for Higher Education**

Ms. Scholz underlined the principles of SCL, which are discussed within the SCL Toolkit produced by Education International. These principles are the following:

- SCL requires an Ongoing Reflexive Process;
- SCL does not have a One-Size-Fits-All Solution;
- Students have Different Learning Styles;
- Students have Different Needs and Interests;
- Choice is Central to Effective Learning in SCL;
- Students have Different Experiences and Background Knowledge;
- Students should have Control Over their Learning;
- SCL is about 'Enabling' not 'Telling'; and
- Learning needs Cooperation between Students and Staff.

Of course, in order to reflect these principles in a concrete manner, these must be adapted according to the needs of the student body make up. Afterwards, Ms. Scholz described the participation of the National Commission for Higher Education within the Eurostudent survey.<sup>10</sup> The main aim of the EUROSTUDENT project is to collate comparable data on the social dimension of European higher education. It focuses on the socio-economic background and on the living conditions of students, but it also investigates temporary international mobility. The project strives to provide reliable and insightful cross-country comparisons. It does this through coupling a central coordination approach with a strong network of national partners in each participating country. In this way, an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the respective national frameworks in international comparison can be made.<sup>11</sup>

### **7.4 Angelo Micallef, Il-Kunsill tal-iStudenti Universitarji (KSU)**

Il-Kunsill tal-iStudenti Universitarji (KSU) has regularly dealt with the issues of quality and rigidity. When it comes to rigidity, Mr. Micallef referred to the Students' Charter, which is found in the majority of HEIs. In Malta's case, the Students' Charter is not legally binding. The issue of flexibility will be given greater importance within the relationship between students and lecturers which, although regulated, will be allowed the flexibility of working together.

#### *The Students' Charter*

*The Students' Charter outlines the unique relationship between the University and its students as equal stakeholders in higher education. It illustrates the entitlements and responsibilities of both, as well as provides a framework for the University to develop and improve its services where appropriate.<sup>12</sup>*

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10 The results of comparative and national reports may be viewed on:  
<http://www.eurostudent.eu/results/reports>

11 [www.eurostudent.eu](http://www.eurostudent.eu)

12 The Students' Charter, Preamble.

Surely, effort and changes are required from both the institution and the students enrolled in the course programmes. Currently, KSU is also embarking on a project entitled 'My Favourite Professor', which is being received very positively by students and which will hopefully yield positive outcomes.

This initiative seeks to promote these lecturers. Above all, this project will encourage students to think positively and discuss the way they enjoy being taught. The project seeks to ask students to share memorable experiences of good teaching practices. This first step involves collecting criteria which in the students' eyes, a good lecturer should have. This is then determined and discussed in various workshops.

All these qualities comprise a report which is made available to the University. This report forms the basis of a criteria system used to choose those most deserving of the title: "My Favourite Professor". Students are given a time frame to nominate their favourite lecturer and a Board will then decide who qualifies according to the compiled report. It is interesting to note that a number of determining factors are considered and the Board also attends lectures given by the professor in question, interview other students about their learning experience as well as interview the lecturer him/herself.<sup>13</sup>

In the end, quality assurance needs to be given greater importance in Malta, and thus the pressing need for a Quality Assurance Agency is evermore evident.

## **7.5 Question Time and Discussion - Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator**

The discussion was started with the statement that if the aim is to achieve equivalence between programmes then all international programmes need to be scrapped. Programmes are meant to be comparable and not equivalent. Inter-faculty mobility is also an important point. The maturity clause has also worked well and it is certainly a pathway which needs to be underlined. Thus, a referencing system needs to be adopted, whereby the transparency between the ECTS and VET systems are really enhanced. Bridges need to be built in Higher Education rather than barriers. Programmes that complement each other also need to be designed. Student participation must also increase as it evokes a sense of ownership and belonging to a university. Structures are important to ensure that there is quality whilst quality agents must act as quality ambassadors within the HEIs. One of the speakers argued that it is very important to set a maturity period within which to set the quality assurance agency and make it workable whilst learning from the good practices of nearby countries.

Furthermore, another speaker positively observed that Malta is very advanced within this field. Regarding quality assurance, it was enquired whether Malta is capable of self-assuring and asked whether a quality assurance agency is such a necessity. The Bologna Process deals a lot with quality but the quality of the law must also be assessed. Thus, one must assess everyday realities vis-à-vis the lights in the stocktaking reports.

In reply it was stated that such issues are continuously being discussed in Malta particularly regarding better ways to improve the quality of training and education systems. Academics have been trained to think that they are autonomous so the issues of learning outcomes and quality assurance have been a hot debate because some academics do not want to answer to anybody. However, this is not going to be the case anymore.

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13 <http://www.ksu.org.mt/en/news/615-my-favourite-professor>

## **8. Closure- Dr James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator**

Dr. James Calleja maintained that it was very interesting to discuss the concept of SCL from different perspectives. Quality assurance has existed for quite some time, under different models and disguises. The need to have a Quality Assurance Agency is very important in order to establish transparency across all institutions. Moreover, with the purpose of establishing a knowledge based society, curricula must be addressed. The validation of informal and non-formal learning would increase the knowledge base whilst it may be confirmed that e-learning is a tool which is conducive of SCL.

Motivation is necessary to remain in the teaching profession as one needs to be motivated in order to motivate others. Therefore, assessing oneself is the only way to measure whether that a particular knowledge, skill and competence have been learnt. Finally, flexible pathways have their own restrictions and limitations; therefore flexibility also has to be framed within a set context.

In conclusion, Dr. Calleja thanked the participants for their contributions throughout this conference and thanked the National Team of Bologna Experts, the European Union Programmes Agency and the National Commission for Higher Education for the organisation of this event.

### **8.1 Outcomes of the meeting**

This conference proved to be an opportunity for discussion for teachers and academics who are familiar with the concept and principles of SCL but who still require concrete tools and recommendations in order to be able to implement these principles within the classroom. Furthermore, students were able to raise their own concerns about SCL and question the willingness or rather the readiness of the student body to embark upon a SCL approach. On the other hand, other elements such as quality assurance, lifelong learning and learning outcomes, which are incorporated within SCL were also discussed in order to explore ways how to better the learning experience. Motivation is also a vital factor as it instigates students to think and be critical of their own work.

The internal experts also provided a very good insight of good practices at their home universities, which participants were able to question and learn from. E-Learning was explored as a tool of 'common language' between different students and as a platform for innovative learning methods. Nonetheless, it was agreed that e-learning should complement other forms of learning in order to consolidate a holistic learning process.

### **8.2 Recommendations**

The participants of 'Student-Centred Learning: A Bologna Process International Conference' bring forward the following recommendations:

- The formation of a Forum for HEIs for further consultation and collaboration;
- The need for a holistic approach to education, which incorporates primary, secondary and higher education;
- The establishment of a national Quality Assurance Agency, which would regulate the field in its aim to obtain standardization and harmonization across HEIs;
- The proper and diverse use of e-learning as a tool for SCL; and
- The increased commitment of HEIs in support of SCL.

## List of Seminars

### **2009-2011 Bologna cycle:**

- *Quality Assurance: A National Bologna Process Seminar, 19 November 2010.*
- *The Bologna Process: A National Bologna Expert Training Session, 14 December 2010.*
- *Employability: A National Bologna Process Seminar, 20 January 2011.*
- ***Student-Centred Learning: A Bologna Process International Conference, 16-17 February 2011.***
- *Education, Research and Innovation: A National Bologna Process Seminar, 10 March 2011.*
- *International Openness and the External Dimension: A Bologna Process International Seminar, 18-19 April 2011.*
- *Learning Outcomes: A Bologna Process Training Conference, 20 May 2011.*

## List of Publications

### **2009-2011 Bologna cycle:**

- *The Impact of the Bologna Process on Higher Education Institutions in Malta - An overview of the targets achieved and future challenges.*
- *Quality Assurance, Employability and Education, Research & Innovation - A Report.*
- *Bologna Expert Training Session & Learning Outcomes Seminar - A Report.*
- ***Student-Centred Learning A Bologna Process International Conference - A Report.***
- *International Openness and the External Dimension Seminar - A Report.*
- *Bologna Expert Training Session, Student-Centred Learning, International Openness & the External Dimension and Learning Outcomes - Information Booklet.*
- *Bologna Process Malta - At a Glance.*



## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>AHELO</b>	Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes
<b>BFUG</b>	Bologna Follow-up Group
<b>ECTS</b>	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
<b>CEE Network</b>	Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
<b>EHEA</b>	European Higher Education Area
<b>EI</b>	Education International
<b>ESG</b>	European Standards and Guidelines
<b>ESU</b>	European Students' Union
<b>EUA</b>	European University Association
<b>EUPA</b>	European Union Programmes Agency
<b>FES</b>	Foundation for Educational Services
<b>HE</b>	Higher Education
<b>HEIs</b>	Higher Education Institutions
<b>INQAAHE</b>	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
<b>ITS</b>	Institute of Tourism Studies
<b>JOIMAN</b>	Joint Degree Management and Administration Network
<b>KSU</b>	Kunsill tal-iStudenti Universitarji (University Students' Council)
<b>LLL</b>	Lifelong Learning
<b>MATSEC</b>	Matriculation Certificate
<b>MCAST</b>	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
<b>MOCCA</b>	Model for Core Curricula with Integrated Mobility Abroad
<b>MQC</b>	Malta Qualifications Council
<b>NCHE</b>	National Commission for Higher Education
<b>NQFs</b>	National Qualifications Frameworks
<b>NTBE</b>	National Team of Bologna Experts
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>SEC</b>	Secondary Education Certificate
<b>T4SCL</b>	Toolkit For Student Centred Learning
<b>UoM</b>	University of Malta
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training



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