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20th Anniversary of the Bologna Declaration: From overview of processes to ongoing activities and experiences

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Tuning Journal for Higher Education (TJHE), Tuning Journal in short, is an international peer-reviewed journal publishing in English original research studies and reviews in all aspects of competence-based, student-centred, and outcome-oriented education reforms at university level across the globe. It is a joint initiative of the University of Deusto (Spain) and the University of Groningen (The Netherlands) that is run by the Tuning International Academy (http://tuningacademy.org/): an international meeting point for fostering innovative teaching, learning, and research in higher education.

The main goal of the Journal is to promote quality research into the 'Tuning Methodology' for designing, implementing, and assessing context-sensitive degree programmes and to subject the tools developed during Tuning projects and other educational projects to full academic scrutiny and debate among students, teachers, policy makers, administrators, and academics across societies, cultures, professions, and academic disciplines. To this end, the Journal invites applications for thematic issues, conference proceedings or monographs from all stakeholders. Guidelines for the preparation and submission of manuscripts are appended to this Issue and available at the web of the Journal: http://www.tuningjournal.org/

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Contents

Editorial

20th Anniversary of the Bologna Declaration: From overview of processes to ongoing activities and experiences

Luigi F. Donà dalle Rose
Editor

Anna Serbati
Assistant Editor

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The present Issue comes to the light in May 2019, exactly twenty years after the signing of the Bologna Declaration on May 19th, 1999. For this important event, the Editorial Team of TJHE planned to edit an Anniversary Issue. Meanwhile, the Tuning Academy has also published an impressive book "*REFORM! TUNING the Modernisation Process of Higher Education in Europe*",[1] by Robert Wagenaar, Director of the University of Groningen branch of the International Tuning Academy and cofounder of Tuning. Those interested in knowing more about the last three decades of HE policies in Europe will find real pleasure in reading those pages.

In such a context, the present Issue relies on two invited papers, plus some ordinarily submitted manuscripts, which witness a grass-root situation, rich in critical awareness and creativeness. Both types of papers were subjected to our standard double blind peer review procedure.

Before describing the content of this Issue, we would like, as Editors having quite different ages, to share the way in which we experienced the overall process following the Bologna Declaration.

One of us, the Editor, was Delegate and Consultant of the Rector of Padua University for the European mobility since 1990 for about 25 years. He took active part in the grass-root work, which at first paved the way to the Bologna Process and which then accompanied the several steps of that very process. This work was grounded in the international relations of an historical European University, but it was inspired by the fresh European winds that, at the beginning the Erasmus programme, were blowing everywhere. One of

[1] Robert Wagenaar, *REFORM! TUNING the Modernisation Process of Higher Education in Europe: A Blueprint for Student-Centred Learning* (Bilbao and Groningen: International Tuning Academy, 2019). Also accessible through the University of Groningen. Accessed May 8, 2019, https://www.rug.nl/research/portal/files/75936039/Complete_thesis.pdf.

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the most rewarding initial memories was the participation in the Toulouse Meeting (early '90s), when ECTS was endorsed by the European Commission as the official transfer tool for the recognition of the studies carried out abroad by Erasmus students. On that occasion, he first felt immersed in the community of European projects' "*lovers and actors*". After that, his "European" activity was a continuous effort in trying to find feasible ways at institutional and administrative level to translate in life practice, in a word to implement, the goals put forward by Erasmus and by the many other subsequent and complementary programmes. The Bologna Declaration thrusted this commitment, giving new enthusiasm. Participation in Tuning, CoRe2 and other EU projects followed. Often a question popped up among ourselves: *Why am I doing all that*? It is difficult to answer in a simple way. Many elements where there: the hope to improve the university life of our country, whose academic "weaknesses" were at first confirmed to our eyes by the euro-comparisons; the wish to be live actors in a hopefully far-reaching path, the zest to feel in the forefront of an epochal process, the joy of meeting and sharing all this with many willing, enthusiastic and quite expert people, from many different countries. But perhaps the most gratifying thing was that we liked this type of commitment, the wish to make bridges between people, degree courses, institutions, often to be simply a "go-between", i.e. between people looking for cooperating together. In this manner, we met several of the leading actors in the play, who reassured and inspired us: we exchanged ideas with them, we grew up and we were prepared to go further.

The other one, the Assistant Editor, is currently assistant professor at Padua University and benefited—as a student before than as a professor—of the Bologna Process and its related national reforms. First of all, she attended the university after the implementation of the system establishing bachelor/master/doctoral degree in Adult Education. She could experience the progressive and growing level of deepness through the qualifications in understanding the disciplines and their application in the real working contexts, starting from the basis towards more detailed knowledge and more robust competences. One of the most crucial experiences she had during higher education studies was a 5-months Erasmus exchange in London, which represented for her a key milestone in her professional and personal growth. During her Ph.D. in Educational and Training Sciences, she had the chance to actually study the implementation of the Bologna Process in national and institutional reforms and to participate to innovative projects at Padua University as well as to Tuning initiatives. From studying the Tuning philosophy and concepts in books she moved to implementing them with

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international colleagues, enjoying the reflection, the sharing, the opportunity for debating and trying to innovate teaching, learning and assessment in higher education towards student centered perspectives and competence-based approaches. These opportunities fostered her passion in higher education evolutions and innovations and she became involved also in several staff development initiatives for academics at national and international level, with a specific focus on programme and syllabus design, planning and assessment.

The two invited contributions offer complementary "voices" on the process started with the Bologna Declaration: a *passionate* voice from the Council of Europe and a *solid and informative* voice from the EU academic and institutional communities.

The author of the first invited contribution is Sjur Bergan, Head of the Education Department of the Council of Europe. Among his many achievements, we only remind here his book *Qualifications: Introduction to a Concept*,[2] a source of inspiration for many of us in those past years. His present contribution focusses on EHEA, the European Higher Education Area, i.e. at first the *aim* and then the *achievement* of the Bologna Process. It offers the view of the Process, as seen from a Council of Europe perspective through an active participation of the author in the BFUG-Bologna Follow Up Group and its Board. The article is enriched by precious memories and author's perceptions. In order to describe the overall process, the author identifies six different subsequent phases along the sequence of the Bologna Ministerial meetings: *launching* of the Bologna Process, *dynamical development and need for stocktaking*, *consolidation* (ending in 2010 with the "transition" from the Bologna *process* to the European Higher Education *Area*), *first phase of the established EHEA*, *concerns about EHEA* and *renewed optimism*, *debate about the character of the process*. Then, the article presents in depth the actual content of the EHEA structural reforms, i.e. quality assurance (with the challenge of becoming "international"), recognition and qualification frameworks (where a possible challenge stems from online non-national qualifications).[3] As to the challenges faced by the whole process, this author states that "The challenges in structural reforms lie more in implementation than in developing new structures and perhaps even

[2] Sjur Bergan, *Qualifications: Introduction to a Concept* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing Council of Europe Higher Education Series No. 6, 2007).

[3] See, among others, Borhene Chakroun and James Keevy, *Digital Credentialing: Implications for the recognition of learning across borders* (Paris: UNESCO, 2018). Also accessible through UNESCO Digital Library. Accessed May 8, 2019, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000264428.

developing new policies". He clarifies this point by presenting the discussion occurred in the BFUG about the character of the process, whether it is a voluntary and inspiring participation or rather it involves a serious commitment to implementing the EHEA reforms. The final part of the article deals with academic values (how to make them more "operational" within EHEA) and with the further challenges related to interaction with the rest of the world and to the internal governance (and credibility) of EHEA.

The second invited contribution comes from Maria Sticchi Damiani, who since the early '90s acted extensively to promote international cooperation and European HE projects, Erasmus in particular. Apart from much more, as described in her bio-note, she was the official Italian representative in the BFUG since its start till 2014 and she coordinated the Italian team of the Bologna Promoters. According to one of the reviewers, her contribution "provides a solid and informative overview, on the history of the Bologna Process and the ramifications of its debates", particularly useful to younger generations. It describes the two decades following the Bologna Declaration according to a "*conceptual thread*", which identifies "*the specific features which coexisted and overlapped during the process, although one or some of them seemed to prevail at each stage*". Looking back at the whole process, she identifies three broad phases: a pre-process *Cooperation phase* strongly supported by the EU initiatives, Erasmus above all, followed by a *Convergence phase* dominated by the Ministerial Meetings of the rapidly increasing number of participating Countries and by the work of the BFUG, well supported by "*international organizations and major stakeholders*". She finally identifies a *Change phase*, intertwined with the second one, characterised by the actual reforms which took place with regard to HE in terms of national laws and coordinated initiatives in the participating countries. The three phases contributed in diversified ways to the development of a common asset of *principles, actions, policies and tools*, which are all described in detail. The conclusive part of her contribution is a reflection on the actual impact of the reforms at the grass-root level and on whether the reforms have been consistently implemented in the different countries. According to the author the still many missing bricks in this huge educational enterprise are now mainly in the hands of the academic communities and in their collaboration across the borders of the participating countries.

As a further comment to our presentation of these two precious and complementary overviews, the interested reader will find it rewarding to look at the two initial chapters of the above quoted book by Wagenaar. In particular, at the end of its second chapter, referring to the main present challenges to be faced by EHEA, the author adds—to the main challenges

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outlined above and in line with the Paris Communiqué of the Bologna Ministers—the huge challenge of an "extensive attention for *innovative teaching and learning* and pedagogical training and continuous professional development of higher education teachers".[4]

Following these two Europe-oriented overviews, we then present here an interesting point of view (based on a constructive criticism) about the state of affairs of Quality Assurance in Africa. The article by Lazarus Nabaho and Wilberforce Turyasingura, from Uganda Management Institute, offers in its introduction an overview of those processes regarding African Higher Education, which started at the beginning of 2000 years and which were/are promoting '*revitalising of higher education*' (in the words of the recent African Union Commission's education strategic framework plans). Quality Assurance plays a crucial role in this effort. Indeed, the Conference of African Ministers of Education in 2007, led by "*the desire to synchronise the diverse higher education systems which have roots in multiple national and colonial legacies across the region*", adopted the African Higher Education Harmonisation Strategy, an overarching policy framework, which includes a whole set of instruments—named Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF)—related to the issue of academic quality. Among others, these instruments (some are still under development) include the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA) and the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM). This latter provides a self-assessment tool to those Higher Education Institutions, which are willing to check their performance both at institutional- and at programme-level. As an important part of this self-assessment, a given institution is asked to complete the "AQRM survey". Then, the core part of the present article describes the results of a content analysis of the AQRM survey questionnaire on the basis of Harvey and Green's conceptual model for defining quality in higher education. The discussion of the results emphasises the fact that the AQRM notion of quality focusses mostly on "fitness for purposes" and "exceptional". This induces the authors to highlight the aspects of academic quality, which are "latent" in AQRM and which—if included in the survey—might lead to a better QA instrument.

The following three contributions well fit the expectations and the challenges raised by the above invited papers.

The contribution by Giovanni Barbato, Roberto Moscati, and Matteo Turri focuses on the epochal changes occurring in university education and

[4] Wagenaar, *REFORM! TUNING the Modernisation Process of Higher Education in Europe: A Blueprint for Student-Centred Learning,* 107.

on the changing nature of the teaching activity to answer to the social, cultural and economic challenges emerging in modern society.

The article deepens the process of change on the professional profile of academics in an increasing tension between the traditional teaching methods versus the learning styles and professional expectations of students. Authors offer first a theoretical overview of the topic, based on two dimensions, the teacher/university relationship and the teacher/student relationship, to investigate the evolution of the professional profile of academics as teachers on the basis of seven teaching practices identified in the literature. The main part of the article is then a case study from Italy, which can be interesting for wider audience in Europe and in the world. The above-mentioned teaching practices found in the literature were the main subject of 90 in-depth interviews with teachers in charge of modules in undergraduate courses; interviewees were academics at different career levels with at least three years of activity and with full responsibility of their modules.

The findings show that, besides some limits that are specific to professional bureaucracies, the support of universities is fundamental for the promotion of innovation in teachers' teaching practices, which are otherwise regulated and shaped only by their respective disciplinary communities.

The contribution by María José Bezanilla, Ana García-Olalla, Jessica Paños, and Manuel Poblete offers "*a comprehensive model for the analysis of the implementation of competence-based learning (CBL) in Higher Education*". Out of the present authors, two ones co-authored the book "Competence-based learning".[5] In the introduction to this latter, the Tuning General Coordinators, who were welcoming the book itself among the Tuning publications, wrote: "This book shifts from design to implementation and it is as such a concrete example how to proceed. […] this is a book which is prepared to accompany the process of change at a concrete university". The present article has the same flavour, offering to any interested higher education institution a tool able to reveal the degree of impact that CBL has in its own educational structure and activities. The tool is based on an accurate analysis of the relevant literature, mainly but not only in the Spanish and Latin America context, with the aim of finding criteria and indicators that can help to effectively assess the actual degree of implementation of CBL in a given institution. After a first selection of criteria and indicators based on the literature and with the collaborative effort of a team of experts, the authors identified seven dimensions *which explore the degree of*

[5] Aurelio Villa Sanchez and Manuel Poblete Ruiz, eds., *Competence-based learning. A proposal for the assessment of generic competences* (Bilbao: Deusto University Press, 2008).

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implementation of CBL in HEIs. They are: national regulatory framework, HEI regulatory framework, design of degree qualifications, subject/module planning process, teaching/learning practices, and improvement cycle both at degree level and at subject/module level. As a whole, these seven dimensions are articulated in 18 evaluation criteria, each one of these latter being articulated in indicators (for a total of 96 indicators). The model is going to be tested in two Latin America universities during the next academic year.

The final contribution, by Marina De Rossi and Emilia Restiglian, describes the development of an interdisciplinary workshop of Visual Storytelling aimed at fostering documentation competences in students of a Primary Teaching master degree. The related methodology might inspire in the interested reader a useful strategy to promote digital skills in educational contexts. As one reviewer stated, "hybrid solutions are becoming more popular as time goes by. The authors describe an interesting rationale in terms of relation between these approaches and competency development. Even more, they relate them with 21st century's competencies", addressing key relevant challenges that higher education is facing with digital transformation. More in detail, the article's workshop aimed at developing primary teacher's professional competences related to digital narrative documentation (with reference to real educational experiences observed at school), to be certified through the Open Badge system, and it was implemented in two university courses involving 32 students. Data collection required students to fill a semi-structured questionnaire at the end of the workshop. Other data came from a rubric used to evaluate Visual Storytelling products from three different points of view (students' self-assessment; university teachers; school teachers). The authors conclude that the authentic task proposed in the workshop stimulated students to using technologies creatively, critically, and reflectively. According to the students' opinion, the workshop also facilitated collaborative processes as well skills of self-assessment and the personalisation of learning.

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Articles

The European Higher Education Area: A road to the future or at way's end?

Sjur Bergan*

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Abstract: The goal of the Bologna Process was to develop a European Higher Education Area within a decade. The goal and the process proved to be attractive, new countries steadily applied for accession, and the Bologna Process has brought about substantial reforms. At the same time, the drive and optimism of the early years has given way to more measured optimism and even a sense of disillusion as we approach the 20th anniversary of the Bologna Declaration. The article outlines six phases in the development of the European Higher Education Area and then looks at some of the main challenges the EHEA faces as it approaches its third decade. Structural reforms have been the hallmark of the EHEA, and in this area the main challenges concern implementation rather than the development of new structures even if some policy challenges also remain. In the run-up to the 2018 Ministerial conference, EHEA faced a bitter debate on the character of the EHEA itself, linked to the questions of how to foster implementation of commitments undertaken and what it means to be a voluntary process. The fundamental values on which the EHEA builds are now threatened in some EHEA members, the role of the EHEA in a global context, and its relevance and governance constitute other challenges.

Keywords: Bologna Process; European Higher Education Area; structural reforms; fundamental values; higher education cooperation; higher education governance; higher education policy; intergovernmental cooperation.

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More information about the author is available at the end of the article.

I. **Introduction**

The march toward a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was launched by Ministers of 29 European countries in Bologna in June 1999. The goal of the Bologna Process was to develop a European Higher Education Area within a decade,[1] normally interpreted as meaning by 2010. This was an ambitious goal, even if it may have been lacking in more specific goals and milestones.

If I were to venture a brief and unofficial description of the goals of the EHEA at the outset, it would be to create a higher education area in which students could move freely without losing any part of the value of their qualifications in the process. Structural reforms were seen as the main tools to make this vision come true. Today, the EHEA web site describes the Area as:

> a unique international collaboration on higher education and the result of the **political will of 48 countries** with different political, cultural and academic traditions, which, step by step during the last twenty years, built an area implementing a common set of commitments: **structural reforms and shared tools**. These 48 countries agree to and adopt reforms on higher education on the basis of common key values, such as freedom of expression, autonomy for institutions, independent student unions, academic freedom, free movement of students and staff. Through this process, countries, institutions and stakeholders of the European area continuously adapt their higher education systems making them more compatible and strengthening their quality assurance mechanisms. For all these countries, the main goal is to **increase staff and students' mobility and to facilitate employability**.[2]

The goal and the process proved to be attractive, and new countries steadily applied for accession. The Bologna Process fulfilled the ideal of the classical French tragedies: the preferred option is to be loved but it is better to be hated than to be ignored. Ignored the Bologna Process was not in its first decade, and it was loved much more than it was hated.

It was one of the strengths of the movement toward a European Higher Education Area that Ministers early on understood the goals could not be reached unless the Process were overseen by a structure where member states were represented at civil service level[3] and that would meet in between

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[1] Bologna Process, "The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999. Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education," accessed April 8, 2019, http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/1999_Bologna_Declaration_English_553028.pdf.

[2] "European Higher Education Area and Bologna Process," accessed April 29, 2019, http://www.ehea.info/.

[3] The Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) is made up of representatives of the Ministry responsible for higher education of every EHEA member state. In addition, the European

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Ministerial meetings that came to form a series of milestones. Therefore, Ministers met every two – three years[4] and the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) twice a year.[5]

These were complemented by milestones of a different kind. As the Bologna Process approached its half way mark, those most closely involved came to understand that if a European Higher Education Area were to be established in 2010, progress toward that goal needed to be verified at regular intervals. This is the origin of what was first called the Bologna stocktaking and has since 2012 been the implementation report.[6] We have come to take it for granted, but the fact that Ministers accepted that a loosely organized process would include a fairly independent assessment of the extent to which individual countries implement the commitments they undertake was a significant development and an issue that was to resurface more than 10 years later, in the run-up to the 2018 Ministerial conference in Paris.

The present article will seek to provide an overview of major developments in the Bologna Process so far and of some major challenges to the EHEA as it enters its third decade. The author does not lay claim to neutrality: continuous involvement with the BFUG and its Board over almost two decades, including three periods as Chair of the Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks and one period as Co-Chair of the Working Group on Structural Reforms would not make such a claim credible. However, I hope to have demonstrated at least a measure of ability to look at the EHEA with some critical distance through previous writings, in particular through contributions to two editions of the Bologna Process Researchers' Conference.[7,8]

Commission is a member, while the Council of Europe, UNESCO, and six stakeholder organizations (EUA, EURASHE, ESU, ENQA, Education International, Business Europe) are consultative members.

[4] Every two years in the period 1999 – 2009, followed by a conference in 2010 to mark the formal launch of the EHEA. Since then conferences were held in 2012, 2015, and 2018, and the next will be held in June 2020.

[5] Except in the year in which the Ministerial meeting is held, when the BFUG holds two meetings in the semester preceding the conference to finalize the draft communiqué.

[6] An overview will be found at http://www.ehea.info/page-implementation, accessed on April 8, 2019.

[7] Sjur Bergan, "The EHEA at the Cross-roads. The Bologna Process and the Future of Higher Education," in *The European Higher Education Area: Between Critical Reflections and Future Policies*, eds. Adrian Curaj, Liviu Matei, Remus Pricopie, Jamil Salmi and Peter Scott (Heidelberg: Springer Open Access, 2015), 737–752.

[8] Sjur Bergan and Ligia Deca, "Twenty Years of Bologna and a Decade of EHEA: What is Next?," in *European Higher Education Area: the Impact of Past and Future Policies*, eds.

II. **Stages of development**

As argued elsewhere,[9] the EHEA has developed through several stages, the timing of which can best be indicated with reference to the Ministerial conferences.

The ***first phase*** (Bologna 1999,[10] Praha[11] 2001, arguably also the Sorbonne conference of 1998) marks ***the launching of the Bologna Process***. This was an exciting time because the discussion was entirely about goals for a future that seemed distant even if participants knew a decade is short by any historical standards and that deadlines have a way of arriving sooner than expected. There was a feeling of optimism, of being part of an important European movement, and of higher education policy moving from the periphery of political concerns to a place closer to the center.

The second phase (Berlin 2003, Bergen 2005) was one of ***dynamic development as well as of the beginning realization of the need for what was then called stocktaking***. There was still an optimistic feeling of purpose and at the same time a sense that the Bologna Process was maturing and required more careful policy development. Important initiatives like the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA and the Standard and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) were launched in Berlin[12] and adopted in Bergen.[13] The need for

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Curaj *et al*. (Heidelberg/Bucureşti: Springer Open/UEFISCDI , 2018), 283–306, Accessed April 8, 2019, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-77407-7_19.

[9] Bergan, "The EHEA at the Cross-roads. The Bologna Process and the Future of Higher Education," 737–752.

[10] Each conference adopted a Declaration or a Communiqué provided in the list of references as "Bologna Process YEAR. TITLE". They are easily accessible through http://www.ehea.info/page-ministerial-declarations-and-communiques, accessed on April 8, 2019.

[11] While English is the language of communication of the EHEA, the present author feels that using the original version of proper names, including of cities, constitutes a mark of respect and recognition of the multi-cultural and multilingual nature of the EHEA. An exception is made where the anglicized form is a part of the official name of a document, so the 2001 meeting was held in Praha but the document adopted by Ministers is referred to as the Prague Communiqué. Translating proper names betrays a double imperfection: the inability to cope with foreign names, and the limits of our geographical and other knowledge, since one can only "translate" names of cities one has heard about.

[12] Bologna Process, "Realising the European Higher Education Area" (Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education, Berlin, 2003), accessed April 8, 2019, http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/2003_Berlin_Communique_English_577284.pdf.

[13] Bologna Process, "The European Higher Education Area - Achieving the Goals" (Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education,

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verifying progress was recognized by Ministers in Berlin and the first stocktaking report submitted to them in Bergen. The stocktaking reports were preceded by a series of Trends reports developed by the EUA[14] – the first as a background document for the 1999 Bologna conference – as well as by ESU's Bologna with Student Eyes, published for the first time in 2003.[15] This was also the time of the greatest expansion of the Bologna Process from the original 29 (or 30)[16] countries to 40 in Berlin and 45 in Bergen.

The ***third phase*** (London 2007, Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve 2009, Budapest and Wien 2010) was marked by ***consolidation***. By the time Ministers met in London, more than half the decade lay behind them. The approaching deadline focused Ministers' minds on what they had committed to achieving in 10 years and dampened their enthusiasm for undertaking new commitments. The London conference adopted a new strategy for the relationship between the EHEA and other areas of the world[17,18] and two further countries joined but there was a feeling of a process slowing down. To boot, one of the two new countries rejoined rather than joined, since Montenegro had been a part of the EHEA as part of Serbia and Montenegro until its declaration of independence in 2006. Kazakhstan's accession, which was not uncontested, was seen as marking the eastern limits of the EHEA. At the same time, this was a period of success as the 2010 conference marked the transition from a process to an area – from the Bologna Process to the European Higher Education Area. This was no small achievement.

The ***fourth phase*** (Bucureşti 2012) was the ***first phase of the established EHEA***. The EHEA had become a fact of life of European higher education

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Bergen, May 19–20, 2005), accessed April 8, 2019, http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/2005_Bergen_Communique_english_580520.pdf.

[14] https://eua.eu/resources/publications.html?&search=Trends&filter_year=&filter_issue, accessed on April 29, 2019.

[15] http://www.ehea.info/page-bologna-with-student-eyes.

[16] The Ministers of 29 countries signed the Bologna Declaration. In 2001 three further countries joined the Bologna process, bringing the total number of member countries to… 33. The explanation was that Liechtenstein, while a member of the European Economic Area, was for some unknown reason not invited to sign the Bologna Declaration but was quietly added to the Bologna Process membership later.

[17] Bologna Process, "London Communiqué. Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalised world" (Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, London, 2007), accessed April 8, 2019, http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/2007_London_Communique_English_588697.pdf.

[18] Bologna Process, "European Higher Education in a Global Setting. A Strategy for the External Dimension of the Bologna Process," accessed April 8, 2019, https://media.ehea.info/file/2007_London/35/4/2007_London_Strategy-for-EHEA-in-global-setting_581354.pdf.

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but no longer attracted the same political interest as before. At the Bucureşti conference 13 of the then 47 member states were represented by high-ranking civil servants rather than Ministers or Deputy Ministers.[19] At the same time, Ministers were presented with substantial reports and proposals not only on structural reforms as well as on academic mobility, which were the original "Bologna topics", but also on the social dimension of higher education, student centered learning, and student support. Not least, the Romanian Bologna Secretariat that served the EHEA between 2010 and 2012 was, in my view, the best we have ever had. Most Secretariat members had their background from the European and Romanian student movement and brought commitment, organizational skills, and knowledge and understanding of education policy to the Process.

The ***fifth phase*** (Yerevan 2015) could be seen as part of the early EHEA and therefore as part of the fourth phase. I nevertheless prefer to see it as a separate phase marked by both ***concerns that the EHEA was stalling and renewed optimism*** in the run-up to and immediate aftermath of the Yerevan conference, helped by what was seen as a dynamic conference at which Ministers had greater influence over the final wording of the Communiqué than at previous conferences. The Yerevan conference welcomed Belarus as a member of the EHEA, accompanied by a Roadmap[20] stipulating the reforms Belarus committed to undertaking by 2018 in view of the fact that it joined the EHEA five years after the Area was formally established and also in view of concerns that had prevented its application from being accepted in 2012 and that had dissuaded the country from applying in 2005. The Yerevan conference was also the half way mark in the second decade of the Bologna Process and the first decade of the EHEA.

By this measure, the 2018 Paris conference must be considered as marking a ***sixth phase***. By the time Ministers gathered, they were closer to the start of a new decade of the EHEA than to the halfway mark of the current decade, which should have focused minds on the implementation of current goals and the definition of new ones. A more important argument for counting the Paris meeting as a sixth phase was the fact that the optimism felt in Yerevan had long since vanished through a series of particularly difficult discussions in the BFUG.

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[19] Sjur Bergan and Ligia Deca, "Twenty Years of Bologna and a Decade of EHEA: What is Next?," 283–306.

[20] Bologna Process 2015 b, "Belarus Roadmap for Higher Education Reform". Accessed April 8, 2019. http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/70/9/Roadmap_Belarus_21.05.2015_613709.pdf.

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The state of implementation was an important part of the focus but in a peculiar way. The discussions in the BFUG in the run up to the Paris meetings were more acrimonious than at any previous time, and the acrimony focused on ***the character of the process***: should it be voluntary in the sense that joining was optional but once a country had joined, it would be expected to implement its commitments, or should it be voluntary in the sense that the policies and commitments undertaken through Ministerial declarations and communiqués should be considered as aspirations rather than as real commitments? There had been some discussion of the character of the EHEA previously,[21,22] but it now resurfaced much more strongly and questioned some of the assumptions underlying the stocktaking and implementation reports. The end result was a compromise that emphasized peer learning on key commitments related to structural reforms overseen by a Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG).[23]

On the background of this brief overview of the development of the EHEA, it is now time to turn to a thematic consideration of some of the main challenges facing the EHEA as it turns twenty and as it prepares for the 2020 Ministerial conference.

III. **Structural reforms**

Structural reforms are in many ways the hallmark of the EHEA and its main success story.[24] The EHEA is certainly not a household name outside of the circles of those working in and on higher education. Nevertheless, the

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[21] Sjur Bergan, "The EHEA at the Cross-roads. The Bologna Process and the Future of Higher Education," in *The European Higher Education Area: Between Critical Reflections and Future Policies*, eds. Adrian Curaj, Liviu Matei, Remus Pricopie, Jamil Salmi and Peter Scott (Heidelberg: Springer Open Access, 2015) 737 – 752.

[22] Robert Harmsen, "Future Scenarios for the European Higher Education Area: Exploring the Possibilities of "Experimentalist Governance"," in *The European Higher Education Area: Between Critical Reflections and Future Policies*, eds. Adrian Curaj, Liviu Matei, Remus Pricopie, Jamil Salmi and Peter Scott (Heidelberg: Springer Open Access, 2015) 785 – 803

[23] Bologna Process, "Paris Communiqué" (Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Paris, 2018), accessed April 8, 2019, http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/EHEAParis2018_Communique_final_952771.pdf.

[24] Bologna Process, "*Report by the Structural Reforms Working Group to the BFUG" (*Strasbourg, Brussels, Vatican City, Warsaw, December 8, 2014), accessed April 8, 2019, http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/72/1/Final_Report_of_the_Structural_Reforms_WG_613721.pdf.

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reform of the degree structure is better known, even if people do not always relate it of the EHEA. In France, for example, "LMD" – *licence, mastère, doctorat*; the French for "bachelor, master's, doctorate" – is a fairly well known term.

III.1. *Quality assurance*

The structural reforms of the EHEA focus on qualifications and quality assurance. The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)[25] have become the gold standard for quality assurance in Europe and no country can afford to ignore them. Even when some actors express criticism of quality assurance, they tend to do so in relation to the ESG.

Two developments since the launch of the Bologna Process are worth noting. On the one hand, the need for quality assurance was accepted over a period of less than five years. In 1997, when the Lisbon Recognition Convention[26] was adopted, there was still discussion of whether formal quality assurance was required. Therefore, Section VIII of the Convention, on provision of information on the institutions and programs making up the higher education system of the Parties, distinguishes between those countries that have a formal quality assurance system and those that do not. Only five years later, the discussion was no longer about whether quality assurance was needed but about what form it should take. Quality assurance was first mentioned explicitly in the Prague Communiqué,[27] work on the ESG was launched through the Berlin Communiqué,[28] and both were adopted through

[25] Bologna Process, "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)," revised version (Approved by the Ministerial Conference in May 2015), accessed April 8, 2019, http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/72/7/European_Standards_and_Guidelines_for_Quality_Assurance_in_the_EHEA_2015_MC_613727.pdf.

[26] Council of Europe and UNESCO, "Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region" (Lisbon Recognition Convention 1997), accessed April 16, 2019, https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/165 .

[27] Bologna Process, "Towards the European Higher Education Area" (Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education, Prague, May 19, 2001), accessed April 8, 2019, http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/2001_Prague_Communique_English_553 442.pdf.

[28] Bologna Process, "Berlin Communiqué" (2003).

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the Bergen Communiqué;[29] while the European Quality Assurance Register for higher education (EQAR) was established in 2008. The ESG were revised at the Yerevan conference, and the debate focused on the finer details of the revision rather than on major principles.[30,31]

The second noteworthy aspect of quality assurance is that while it is recognized as the sole responsibility of the public authorities responsible for the respective education systems and quality assurance agencies act on a mandate from those public authorities,[32] the agencies are located outside of the public authorities and cannot be instructed in detail, including in specific cases of institutional recognition. This causes some concern in countries with a strong tradition of the Ministry as the ultimate authority in all matters pertaining to higher education but is a core requirement for independent and credible quality assurance. The stakeholder organizations for higher education institutions (EUA, EURASHE), students (ESU), and the quality assurance agencies (ENQA) played a decisive role in the development of the ESG and the establishment of EQAR. The standards and guidelines, while considered by the BFUG and adopted by Ministers, was therefore developed by stakeholder organizations.

Quality assurance is probably the aspect of the EHEA policies and commitments where oversight is the strongest and the least contested. EQAR functions as a *de facto* monitoring body, the membership of which is conditioned on compliance with the ESG, and this compliance is assessed at regular intervals, as is also true for ENQA.

One substantial challenge is to make quality assurance international. Ministers have expressed the intention to make it possible for an institution to seek quality assurance from an agency outside of the country in which the institution operates,[33] but so far only 12 countries have fully accepted that

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[29] Bologna Process, "Bergen Communiqué (2005).

[30] Bologna Process, "Yerevan Communiqué" (Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Yerevan, May 14–15, 2015), accessed April 8, 2019, http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/70/7/YerevanCommuniqueFinal_613707.pdf

[31] Bologna Process, "European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in EHEA," revised version (2015).

[32] Council of Europe, "Recommendation Rec/CM(2007)6 by the Committee of Ministers to member states on the public responsibility for higher education and research, " accessed April 8, 2019, https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805d5dae.

[33] Bologna Process, "Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area. Bucharest Communiqué" (Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bucharest, April 26 – 27, 2012),

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institutions belonging to their system can be quality assured by foreign agencies registered in EQAR, while another 12 countries have gone a considerable way in doing so.[34]

III.2. *Recognition*

Recognition is an older policy area than quality assurance and the key standard of the EHEA antedates the Bologna Process. The Lisbon Recognition Convention[35] was developed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO, it was adopted in April 1997, and it replaced several older conventions, the oldest of which dated from the 1950s.

The recognition of qualifications has been a success in that all EHEA members but one (Greece) have now ratified[36] the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which has become the "gold standard" for recognition in Europe in the same way as the ESG have for quality assurance. The Lisbon Recognition Convention also provides a link with the broader world of recognition as it has been ratified by a number of countries outside of the EHEA (Australia, Canada, Kyrgyzstan, New Zealand, and Tajikistan) and is linked to the UNESCO system of regional conventions. It will also be linked to the global UNESCO Convention that will most likely be submitted for adoption to the General Conference in October/November 2019.

The success in this policy area is more mixed if we look at the implementation of the Convention.[37] The implementation of some parts of the Convention, such as the establishment and functioning of national information centers is broadly satisfactory, where the implementation of other parts – notably Article VII on the recognition of refugees' qualifications

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accessed April 8, 2019, http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/Bucharest_Communique_2012_610673.pdf.

[34] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, "The European Higher Education Area in 2018: Bologna Process Implementation Report" (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018), 140, accessed April 8, 2019. http://www.ehea.info/Upload/BP2018.pdf.

[35] Council of Europe and UNESCO, "Lisbon Recognition Convention 1997."

[36] A constantly updated overview of signatures and ratifications may be found at https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/165/signatures, accessed on April 8, 2019.

[37] Council of Europe and UNESCO, "Monitoring the Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Strasbourg" (Council of Europe Higher Education Series No. 23, Council of Europe Publishing, 2019).

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– is not.[38] Recognition is an area of great public concern but also one in which institutions and national authorities show some reluctance. While all would like their own qualifications to be broadly recognized, the will to recognize the qualifications of others is somewhat less pronounced. This is particularly true for regulated professions, where most countries as well as the EU have specific legislation, but also academic recognition and recognition for unregulated professions show a measure of protectionism.

In 2012, the European Commission brought the concept of "automatic recognition" into the discussion at the very last minute, and it found its way into the communiqué.[39] Since then, further work has been done to make the concept a reality. What is called "automatic recognition" is a natural development within the EHEA in that it assumes that no further questions need be asked for three of the five elements making up a qualification:[40] quality, level, and workload. If a given qualification is a first degree from a recognized institution that has successfully undergone quality assurance according to the ESG and belongs to an education system that has self-certified its qualifications framework against the overarching qualifications framework of the EHEA, there should be no reason to ask further questions about these three elements; the profile and learning outcomes of the qualification must nevertheless be assessed against the purpose for which recognition is sought. My quarrel with automatic recognition is therefore not the reality but the fact that the term promises more than it can deliver.

III.3. *Qualifications frameworks*

Qualifications frameworks were not well known in Europe at the time when the Bologna Process was launched, and Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa were the pioneers in this area. Australia and New Zealand developed qualifications frameworks in part to make it easier for foreign students to obtain recognition of their qualifications when they returned home, since they would then have a good description of the function and place of their specific qualifications within the education system of the country in which they

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[38] Indications are, however, that implementation of his Article has improved since the survey was conducted in late 2015/early 2016. An updated overview of the implementation of Article VII will be presented to the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee at its meeting on June 28, 2019.

[39] Bologna Process, "Bucharest Communiqué."

[40] Sjur Bergan, *Qualifications: Introduction to a Concept*, Council of Europe Higher Education Series No. 6 (Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing, 2007), 69-142.

had obtained the qualification. In the case of South Africa, the qualifications framework was rather seen as an instrument that would make it easier to assess, describe, and recognize the real qualifications of many who had been denied adequate access to formal education under apartheid.

Like the ESG, work on an overarching qualifications framework for the EHEA was launched in 2003, and the framework – known as the QF-EHEA[41] – was adopted in 2005.[42] It took the commitment in the Bologna Declaration[43] to a two cycle system a step further, both by confirming the inclusion of doctoral qualifications[44] and by placing individual qualifications in context. National qualifications frameworks describe how qualifications in that system articulate and how learners can move between qualifications within the system. The QF-EHEA does the same for qualifications belonging to different systems within the EHEA. Qualifications frameworks facilitate recognition, and they incorporate the results of quality assurance. They are therefore a significant development in making the European Higher Education Area just that – a coherent higher education area rather than merely a framework of cooperation between individual national systems.

As could perhaps be expected, implementation is less good than what would have been required to have a seamless higher education area. At the latest count, 32 systems[45] have completed their self-certification and therefore have fully completed national qualifications frameworks, 8 systems were reasonably close to completing them, while 8 systems were still in the early to middle stages of developing their national frameworks.[46]

III.4. *Challenges*

The fact that the reform of education system and structures has been at the heart of the EHEA since its inception does not mean all commitments have been implemented. Successive stocktaking and implementation reports show that much work is still required and that some countries are still quite

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[41] http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/WG_Frameworks_qualification/85/2/Framework_qualificationsforEHEA-May2005_587852.pdf, accessed on April 8, 2019.

[42] Bologna Process, "Bergen Communiqué."

[43] Bologna Process, "Bologna Declaration."

[44] Bologna Process, "Berlin Communiqué."

[45] The reference is to systems rather than countries because some countries, e.g. Belgium and the United Kingdom, have more than one education system.

[46] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, "Bologna Process Implementation Report," 120.

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far from implementing one or more key commitments. The challenges in structural reforms lie more in implementation than in developing new structures and perhaps even developing new policies.

One significant development is the increasing number of qualifications that are not part of any national education system, including but not limited to qualifications from online provision. Since they do not belong to any national system within the EHEA they also do not belong to the EHEA, but the EHEA has yet to develop a common approach to them. Much of the skepticism to such qualifications may be well founded, but there is little in terms of quality assurance that may allow recognition authorities to distinguish viable non-national qualifications from less serious ones. The lack of a coherent approach may ultimately mean that some non-national qualifications may be recognized in some EHEA members but not in others, and/or that recognition in some EHEA members may be used to obtain recognition in other EHEA member states that would not recognize the qualification if the application were made directly but that may do so if the application is for recognition of a qualification that has been recognized in another EHEA member. There are real issues with non-national qualifications, and the EHEA needs to develop a coherent policy rather than brush the issue aside for formal reasons.

Mostly, however, the challenges of structural reform are of implementation rather than overall EHEA structures and policies, and it is telling that the three peer learning groups set up in the 2018-20 work program focus on recognition, qualifications frameworks, and quality assurance. These peer groups arise from the very vivid discussion on implementation and non-implementation in the 2015-18 period, and they take us straight to the question of the character of the EHEA.

IV. **The character of the EHEA**

Broadly, two very different views of the character of the EHEA may be outlined. The first sees the EHEA as a framework for voluntary cooperation and peer learning.[47] The second also emphasizes these aspects but goes one step further: it underlines that once commitments have been undertaken, implementation is not optional, and that implementation will ultimately decide whether other parts of the world trust the EHEA and European higher

[47] Harmsen, "Future Scenarios for the European Higher Education Area: Exploring the Possibilities of "Experimentalist Governance."

education.[48,49] At their 2015 meeting, Ministers recognized that "Implementing agreed structural reforms is a prerequisite for the consolidation of the EHEA and, in the long run, for its success" and stated that "Non-implementation in some countries undermines the functioning and credibility of the whole EHEA".[50]

These two visions clashed quite acrimoniously within the BFUG between 2015 and 2018 in the discussion about measures to address non-implementation. In my close to two decades in the BFUG I have seen quite strong disagreement on several issues, but I have never witnessed a similar level of acrimony. There was a fundamental disagreement over what the EHEA being a voluntary process actually meant. Albania, France and Italy led the group of BFUG members – mostly country representatives – that argued against devising specific follow up measures for countries facing problems in implementing their commitments and also argued against the use of the term "non-implementation". Iceland (as co-chair of the Advisory Group dealing with Non-Implementation[51]), Norway, Germany, the European Commission, and the Council of Europe were among those who argued that implementation of commitments undertaken should be monitored and measures taken to address serious cases of non-implementation.

Predictably, the outcome was a compromise: peer learning groups coordinating and overseen by the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG).[52] The term "non-implementation" was avoided, and peer support was chosen as the preferred method of promoting implementation. At the same time, the BICG, with a majority of country representatives but also with the European Commission and stakeholder representatives as members, was established with a mandate to oversee the peer groups. Reporting on progress to the BFUG would be through the BICG rather than directly by the three peer groups. The compromise was possible in part thanks to the sustained efforts by Bulgaria and Serbia, which co-chaired the BFUG in the crucial semester leading up to the Ministerial conference. The Bulgarian Co-Chair, Ivana Radonova, played a particularly important role.

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[48] Bergan, "The EHEA at the Cross-roads. The Bologna Process and the Future of Higher Education," 737–752.

[49] Una Strand Viðarsdóttir, "Implementation of Key Commitments and the Future of the Bologna Process," in *European Higher Education Area: the Impact of Past and Future Policies*, edited by Curaj et al. (Heidelberg/Bucureşti: Springer Open/UEFISCDI, 2018), 373–385.

[50] Bologna Process, "Yerevan Communiqué."

[51] See http://ehea.info/cid105406/ag-non-implementation-2015-2018.html, accessed on April 8, 2019.

[52] See http://ehea.info/page-Bologna-Implementation-Coordination-Group, accessed on April 8, 2019.

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The compromise, however, does not entirely resolve the question of what it means that the EHEA is a voluntary process. Much will depend on the work of the BICG and how this is perceived by both those who would have liked to see no BICG at all and those who would have preferred a more determined follow up of commitments undertaken but not honored. Much will also depend on the reaction of those outside the BFUG and even of the EHEA. Will a European Higher Education Area relying largely on "peer learning +" be seen as a coherent area the value of whose qualifications can be trusted? If, as we must hope, the answer is positive, we will have identified a good way of fostering implementation, even if the process of getting here was painful. If the answer is negative, the debate on implementation may have to be reopened in the course of the next decade of the EHEA.

A particular case was that of Belarus, which – as noted above – acceded to the EHEA accompanied by a Roadmap[53] that outlined reforms the country was to undertake by 2018 and the implementation of which was overseen by an Advisory Group in which Belarus participated but in a minority position. The link to the broader discussion was underscored by the membership of the group, which included Germany and the Holy See (co-chairs), France, Iceland as co-chair of the Working Group on Non-Implementation, the European Commission, and the Council of Europe. Because of the sensitivity of the discussion, this was the only working or advisory group whose documents were not publicly available through the EHEA web site. Belarus was in the end far from implementing many of its commitments[54] but at the same time argued strongly the Roadmap should not be prolonged. Here also, the solution chosen was a compromise: the Roadmap was replaced by a strategic plan devised by Belarus but commented on by BFUG members. The implementation would be overseen by Belarus but it committed to doing so by involving foreign experts, and it would report back to the Bologna Board.

V. **Fundamental values and the purposes of higher education**

Another area in which there is considerable diversity between EHEA members is the fundamental values on which the EHEA builds: academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and student and staff participation in higher

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[53] Bologna Process, "Belarus Roadmap for Higher Education Reform," accessed April 8, 2019. http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/70/9/Roadmap_Belarus_21.05.2015_613709.pdf.

[54] This was the unanimous view of the non-Belarusian members of the Advisory Group, but the view was not shared by the representatives of Belarus.

education governance. Commitment to those values has been a requirement for EHEA membership at least since 2004,[55] and the commitment was long taken for granted even if there was recognition that the commitment was less than perfect in some members.

The situation changed with the 2015-18 work program, and the fundamental values became an area of concern, as underscored by the thematic debate held in Bratislava in December 2016 supported by a discussion document co-authored by the Council of Europe, the Magna Charta Observatory, the International Association of Universities, and the (then) French Vice Chair of the BFUG.[56] The renewed concern was brought about by at least three developments: the accession of Belarus, whose application had been turned down in 2012[57] because of arrests of members of the academic community protesting the Presidential election in December 2010; developments in Turkey, where many members of the academic community (as well as of the media and the judiciary) were arrested or subjected to travel and other restrictions in the aftermath of the failed coup in July 2016; and the situation of the Central European University (CEU), whose already tenuous position in Hungary was made even more difficult after Parliament, spurred by the government, adopted legislative changes that finally obliged the CEU to move its teaching to Wien as of fall 2019.

The renewed focus on fundamental values underlines the link between the EHEA and the broader foreign policy agenda of many member states as well as the European Commission. Education can be used as a "soft diplomacy" tool to develop people-to-people exchanges[58] and contacts that can then help political cooperation. At the same time, education builds on values that cannot just be set aside. The EHEA would not be European without its fundamental values.

This points to an even more overlooked issue: the purposes of higher education. That higher education plays and should play a major role in

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[55] Bologna Process 2004, "Further Accession to the Bologna Process. Procedures for Evaluation of Applications and Reports from Potential New Members" (Document BFUG B3 7 dated October 4, 2004), accessed April 8, 2019, http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/20041012-13_Noordwijk/79/9/BFUG3_7_further_accessions_579799.pdf.

[56] Bologna Process 2016, "Academic freedom and institutional autonomy – what role for the EHEA?" (Background document for the thematic session of the Bologna Follow Up Group, Bratislava, December 8 – 9, 2016, written by Sjur Bergan, Eva Egron-Polak, Sijbolt Noorda, and Patricia Pol), accessed April 8, 2019, http://ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/20161208-09-Bratislava/12/8/BFUG_SK_ME_52_9_Fundamental_values_669128.pdf.

[57] Bologna Process, "Meeting of the Bologna Follow-Up Group" (Draft outcome of proceedings, Document BFUG_DK_AZ_29_3b, Copenhagen, January 18-19, 2012).

[58] This is the term used by ASEF, the Asia-Europe Foundation.

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preparing for the labor market and in developing the economy is undisputed. However, this is not the only purpose of education. The Council of Europe has defined four major purposes:

- Preparation for the labor market
- Preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies
- Personal development
- The development and maintenance of a broad and advanced knowledge base.[59,60]

The contention that higher education has several purposes is perhaps not hugely controversial but it has also not been very operational within the EHEA, and discussions have often ended with an affirmation that while all purposes are important, the economic purpose of higher education must be given priority.

However, references to the multiple purposes of higher education started being reflected in Ministerial communiqués as of 2007,[61] and the Yerevan Communiqué[62] emphasized the societal and democratic role of higher education much more strongly than previously. In the Yerevan Communiqué, Ministers underlined: "We will support and protect students and staff in exercising their right to academic freedom and ensure their representation as full partners in the governance of autonomous higher education institutions. We will support higher education institutions in enhancing their efforts to promote intercultural understanding, critical thinking, political and religious tolerance, gender equality, and democratic and civic values, in order to strengthen European and global citizenship and lay the foundations for inclusive societies." They also included "making our systems more inclusive" as one of their main priorities.

Nevertheless, even if there is now greater focus on the fundamental values of higher education as well as greater awareness of its societal and not only economic role, the democratic mission of higher education is not strongly reflected in the structural reforms of the EHEA. This may be partly because the QF-EHEA and the ESG were developed at a time when there

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[59] Sjur Bergan, "Higher Education as a 'Public Good and a Public Responsibility': What Does it Mean?", in *The Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research*, edited by Luc Weber and Sjur Bergan (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing Council of Europe Higher Education Series No. 2, 2005), 13–28.

[60] Council of Europe, "Recommendation Rec/CM(2007)6 by the Committee of Ministers to member states on the public responsibility for higher education and research."

[61] Bologna Process, "London Communiqué."

[62] Bologna Process, "Yerevan Communiqué."

was less focus on the broader purposes of higher education and partly because the economic role of higher education tends to carry the day in national policies. Making the democratic mission of higher education key to the EHEA is one of the challenges we should rise to in the next decade of the EHEA. That challenge has not been made easier or less important by the rise of populism in any countries, to the extent that it constitutes or influences the programs of many governments in the EHEA.

One area, however, has been important at least since the Prague conference.[63] Student and staff participation in higher education governance is a characteristic of European higher education and one of the elements that distinguish us from most other areas of the world. The Council of Europe has a long-standing cooperation with US partners in the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility, and Democracy.[64] While US institutions demonstrate a stronger awareness of their role as democratic actors in broader societies, not least in their local communities, student and staff influence on institutional policy as well as on the development of national education systems and policies is much stronger in Europe.

VI. **The EHEA in a global context**

That European higher education works within a global context is a truism but that does not mean the EHEA has found a format of cooperation with the rest of the world. This is true even if other areas, in particular Asia,[65, 66] have looked to the EHEA for inspiration. The Bologna Policy Forum (BPF) was devised as a means to implement the EHEA Global Dimension Strategy.[67,68]

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[63] Bologna Process, "Prague Communiqué."

[64] https://www.internationalconsortium.org/, accessed April 8, 2019.

[65] QueAnh Dang, "The Bologna Process Goes East? from 'Third Countries' to Prioritizing Inter-regional Cooperation Between the ASEAN and EU," in *The European Higher Education Area: Between Critical Reflections and Future Policies*, ed. Adrian Curaj, Liviu Matei, Remus Pricopie, Jamil Salmi and Peter Scott (Heidelberg: Springer Open Access, 2015), 763 – 783.

[66] QueAnh Dang, "Unintended Outcomes of the EHEA and ASEAN: Peripheral Members and their Façade Conformity," in *European Higher Education Area: the Impact of Past and Future Policies*, eds. Curaj et al. (Heidelberg/Bucureşti: Springer Open/UEFISCDI, 2018), 387–406.

[67] Bologna Process, "European Higher Education in a Global Setting. A Strategy for the External Dimension of the Bologna Process," accessed April 8, 2019, https://media.ehea.info/file/2007_London/35/4/2007_London_Strategy-for-EHEA-in-global-setting_581354.pdf

[68] Pavel Zgaga, "Looking out: The Bologna Process in a Global Setting. On the 'External Dimension' of the Bologna Process" (Oslo: Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research,

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The first BPF was held in 2009, and it has been held as part of or in conjunction with every Ministerial conference since then.

It would be difficult to argue that the BPF has been an unmitigated success or that it has found its form. The basic issue may be trying to square the circle. It is difficult for Ministers to meet for more than a day and a half, and EHEA Ministers need to conduct EHEA business as well as interact with their peers from other regions. This has led to series of unsatisfactory formulas that did not leave sufficient time for either the EHEA Ministerial conference of the BPF.

Another issue is the preparation of the BPF. There is no process of joint preparation and no series of topical discussions bringing together high-ranking civil servants and institutional leaders from the EHEA and other regions. Making the BPF – or another framework with similar objectives – an area for meaningful debate and cooperation on a global scale will be another challenge for the next decade of the EHEA.

VII. **Governance and relevance**

The EHEA is an intergovernmental process but higher education policy cannot be developed and implemented in Ministry offices alone. Representatives of institutions, students, and staff therefore have an important role in the EHEA and their influence in the BFUG is stronger than their numbers and their status as consultative members would imply.

The fact that the BFUG is a venue where representatives of ministries, stakeholders, and international institutions and organizations debate and make decisions together, and that they work together in the various groups of the work program, is one of the strengths of the EHEA. Other aspects of the BFUG are less comforting, in particular the relative silence of many member states in discussions and the relatively weak contacts many BFUG representatives have with the political decision makers in their ministries.

Even if the EHEA is a loose process, it requires a measure of organization. As we have seen, it is overseen by the BFUG and Board between Ministerial conferences, and the BFUG adopts a fairly detailed work program soon after each Ministerial conference, based on the priorities in the communiqué that Ministers have adopted. Since 2009, the BFUG has been co-chaired by the

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2007), accessed April 8, 2019, www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/WG_External_dimension/34/3/ExternalDimension_report2007_581343.pdf.

country holding the EU presidency and a non-EU country.[69] Until then, the BFUG had been chaired by the country holding the EU Presidency. A first attempt to give non-EU countries a stronger and more visible role was an extraordinary meeting held in Sarajevo in 2008, at the initiative of the Slovenian EU presidency and Bosnia and Herzegovina, to host the first thematic discussion within the BFUG on the future of the EHEA.[70] The work program relies on classical intergovernmental instruments like working groups and reports, and the energy spent on deciding whether a given group should be labeled a "working", "advisory", or "coordination" groups, and on whether any given group should have sub-group, does not bear witness to a lack of bureaucracy.

In the early years, the EU presidency country also provided the secretariat of the BFUG. Since 2003, however, the country hosting the forthcoming Ministerial conference also provides the BFUG Secretariat. The Secretariat is set up in the upcoming host country-normally within or at least under the authority of its Ministry responsible for higher education, and it operates under the legislation of this country. With the exception of the 2007-2010 Secretariat, which was provided by Belgium (both communities), Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, as they all hosted the 2009 Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve Ministerial conference together,[71] all BFUG Secretariats have been national. Since the current Secretariat arrangement was established, it was intended that other EHEA members could second officials to the Secretariat, but this has only happened since 2015, and on a limited scale.

There is considerable dissatisfaction within the BFUG with the current Secretariat arrangement, as it provides no continuity beyond any given work period. The quality of the Secretariats has also been somewhat diverse, with the initial Norwegian and above all the Romanian Secretariats as the most successful. Therefore, the question of what has been labeled a "permanent" BFUG Secretariat has been raised from time to time.

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[69] Bologna Process, "The Bologna Process 2020 - The European Higher Education Area in the new decade" (Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, April 28 – 29, 2009), accessed April 8, 2019, http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/Leuven_Louvain_la_Neuve_Communique_April_2009_595061.pdf.

[70] Bologna Process, "Bologna 2020" (Discussion document issued to the Bologna Follow Up Group for its extraordinary meeting in Sarajevo, issue date June 12, 2008), accessed April 8, 2019, https://media.ehea.info/file/20080624-25-Sarajevo/01/1/BFUG_Sarajevo_Bologna2020paper_593011.pdf.

[71] Since the 2010 Ministerial conference, held in Budapest and Wien and co-hosted by Hungary and Austria, was held only one year later, the same Secretariat continued to serve the BFUG, reinforced by one member from each of the two new host countries.

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Such a Secretariat would provide greater stability and would be more independent from any given national Ministry. This is an important point, since many of the Secretariats since 2013 have taken instructions as much from their national authorities as from the BFUG. There is therefore a clear case for a Secretariat that works with a time horizon that is not limited to a single work program or Ministerial conference. To establish such a Secretariat, however, a good number of issues would need to be resolved,[72,73] including financial arrangements and guarantees for the Secretariat, the authority under which the Secretariat would work, arrangements for hiring and – in the worst of cases – firing staff, and arrangements for pensions and social security, and the seat and legal arrangements for the Secretariat. Even if these challenges have so far kept the BFUG from exploring a "permanent" Secretariat further, the BFUG will most likely need to explore this option in greater detail as the EHEA enters its third decade.

The level of national representation is an indication of whether the EHEA and the BFUG are perceived as politically relevant. They clearly were in the first couple of phases of the development of the EHEA but political level representation at Ministerial conferences has gone down over time.[74] The 2018 Paris conference represented a clear reversal of the trend, as 42 of the 48 member states were represented at political level[75] but it remains to be seen whether the reversal will be more permanent.

At least since the preparation of the 2007 Ministerial conference the EHEA has been torn between focusing on implementing the goals that have already been adopted and developing new goals. There are clear arguments for focusing on implementation, as successive stocktaking and implementation reports have shown that implementation is imperfect for most goals and dramatically so in some cases. At the same time, however, it is difficult to maintain political commitment to a process that focuses only on implementation.

While structural reforms have been and are likely to remain at the heart of the EHEA, the EHEA cannot be reduced to structural reforms alone. In addition to the renewed attention to fundamental values and the global

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[72] Bergan, "The EHEA at the Cross-roads. The Bologna Process and the Future of Higher Education," 737–752.

[73] Bergan and Deca, "Twenty Years of Bologna and a Decade of EHEA: What is Next?," 283–306.

[74] Ibid., 286 –287.

[75] Françoise Profit, "The Paris Ministerial Conference", presentation to the Bologna Follow Up Group (Wien, September 27, 2018), 3, accessed April 8, 2019, http://www.ehea.info/Upload/BFUG_AU_CH_63_4c_Ministerial_Conference.pdf.

dimension of higher education described above, topics the BFUG has worked or is working on include the social dimension of higher education, mobility teaching and learning, the impact of digitalization, or student support. It is nevertheless symptomatic that the Advisory Group on New Goals, whose task was precisely to suggest new priorities for the EHEA, was, in my view, the least successful Working or Advisory Group in the 2015-18 program.

A consideration of future priorities for the EHEA cannot be divorced from a consideration of what policy areas lend themselves to a loose framework of 48 countries with a high degree of diversity. There is little doubt that the financing of higher education is a priority for most if not all Ministries of EHEA countries. It is far less obvious that the EHEA lends itself to joint action on financing, as the economic realities and policies of EHEA members are probably too diverse.

VIII. **Conclusion**

The development of the EHEA has been a mix of success and failure.[76] In spite of its imperfections, I would nevertheless argue that the EHEA has been a remarkable success and that it has changed higher education in Europe. The EHEA rapidly became a framework that no European country felt it could afford to ignore, and 48 countries now cooperate on higher education reforms in ways that the signers of the Bologna Declaration in 1999 could probably not have imagined. Only two countries party to the European Cultural Convention – San Marino and Monaco – are currently not EHEA members, and San Marino has recently indicated renewed interest.

At the same time, the EHEA is unsure about its future, for reasons described in this article. To be a success, the EHEA needs to define its character and identity. I am among those who believe this identity should include an element of peer pressure somewhat stronger than the current emphasis on peer learning even if it is unlikely to extend to formal monitoring and even less to raise questions of suspension and exclusion, which was also never at the heart of the discussion of non-implementation.

But focusing on implementation alone will not be enough. As it approaches its third decade, the EHEA may be shaken but there is little indication it is sufficiently stirred. If we are to be able to conduct a similar

[76] Eva Maria Vögtle, "20 years of Bologna – a story of success, a story of failure," *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Sciences Research*, https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610.2019.1594717, accessed April 8, 2019.

discussion of its fourth decade as we approach 2030, the EHEA of today must find a stronger sense of purpose for tomorrow. These must, in my view, reconcile the structures that have been the EHEA's greatest success with what should be the EHEA's greatest promise: the role of higher education in helping European societies rise to the greatest challenges they face: the threats to our environmental, societal, cultural, political, and economic sustainability. A European Higher Education Area that serves as the framework for developing European policies to protect our physical environment, overcome populism, and develop the kind of societies in which we would like to live has a future. That future depends on our ability to develop the kind of transversal competences that higher education should develop in all its students and that are included in the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture.[77]

In Bucureşti, where the BFUG met in early April 2019, many banners celebrate the Romanian EU Presidency. One of them hangs on a building that now houses the Ministry of the Interior, but this building has a history. In Ceauşescu's time this building housed the Communist Party Central Committee, and it has a balcony from which the dictator delivers some of his speeches to the "toiling masses", including his last one. At the time of writing, a banner celebrating the EU Presidency hangs just above this balcony.

It would be difficult to find a better illustration of how far Europe has come since 1989, in spite of all our challenges. The EHEA would not have been possible had these political changes not taken place. But the success of our societies also depends in part on our having higher education that will not only train subject specialists but educate intellectuals who have the will and ability to place their own academic discipline in a broader context, ask critical questions but also find the answers to those questions. An EHEA that fosters this kind of higher education will not find itself where Ceauşescu deservedly ended up: on the scrap heap of history.

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From 1999 to 2019: 20 years of European debate, development, and achievements

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Abstract: This paper suggests that, although the Bologna process officially began in the late 1990s, the conditions that made it possible had already been created in the previous decade through the growing practice of international academic cooperation, mainly triggered by EU inter-institutional programmes. As the need for structural reforms in some higher education systems became more evident, in 1999 the Ministers of Education of 29 European countries gathered in Bologna to start a process of voluntary convergence of their systems with the objective of creating a European Higher Education Area. In the last 20 years the participating governments (now 48), with the support of international organizations and major stakeholders, have jointly developed a common framework of principles, actions, policies and tools. Accordingly, different types of structural reforms have taken place in the various countries. At present, however, implementation of the key commitments – full adoption of the three-cycle structure and ECTS, of the Lisbon recognition convention and the Diploma supplement, and of QA systems based on the European standards and guidelines – is still uneven in the EHEA and a peer-support approach was adopted by the ministers last year. Concerning the implementation issue, this paper raises two sets of questions. First: to what extent have the structural reforms implemented by the governments really affected grassroots educational activities? How deeply have the underlying principles – like student-centred learning – been implemented in actual programme design and everyday teaching/learning practice? Second: although inspired by the same basic principles, are EHEA-induced reforms actually being implemented consistently throughout European countries and

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institutions? Deeper involvement and more international coordination of European academics is advocated in the paper, in order to face these challenges and consolidate the EHEA in the years to come.

Key words: Europe; HE systems; HE institutions; cooperation; convergence; reforms; implementation; cultural change.

The Bologna Declaration,[1] signed in 1999 by the Education Ministers of 29 European countries, marks the official start of the process which led to the creation of the European Higher Education Area in 2010 and to its consolidation in the following years. The term "Bologna process" is still used to describe the series of collective actions that have gradually designed a new and distinctive profile of European higher education. This trajectory is certainly the result of a chronological sequence of events, but can also be approached in conceptual terms by identifying the specific features which coexisted and overlapped during the process, although one or some of them seemed to prevail at each stage. To exemplify, let us consider the most significant steps, or phases, in the Bologna process.

I. **Cooperation**

Although the Bologna process officially began in the late 1990s, we suggest that the conditions that made it possible had already been created in the previous decade through the growing practice of international academic cooperation.

In 1987, the European Commission launched the Erasmus programme to promote cooperation among EU higher education institutions. These were encouraged to make agreements enabling them to exchange students for an academic year or a term and give them full recognition for studies done abroad.

In 1988, moreover, 388 Rectors and Heads of Universities, from all over Europe and beyond, gathered in Bologna for the 900th anniversary of the University of Bologna. By signing the Magna Charta Universitatum,[2] they

[1] "The European Higher Education Area: The Bologna Declaration, 19 June 1999," http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/1999_Bologna_Declaration_English_553028.pdf.

[2] "Magna Charta Universitatum" (Bologna, 18 September 1988), http://www.magna-charta.org/resources/files/the-magna-charta/english.

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proclaimed the fundamental academic principles "which must now and always, support the vocation of universities". For the attainment of such goals they advocated "the exchange of information and documentation, and frequent joint projects for the advancement of learning"; and, "as in the earliest years of their history", they encouraged mobility of teachers and students.

Starting in 1989, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was developed by the European Commission as a pilot project involving groups of European institutions that experimented with student mobility in specific subject areas to design a system for the academic recognition of the periods of study abroad.

Within Erasmus networks, academic staff had the opportunity to visit institutions in other European countries, in order to teach, monitor their students abroad and develop joint curricula with colleagues in those institutions. Thematic networks for various subject and thematic areas were also set up from the mid-1990s: there, groups of European academics from all eligible countries worked together to map the diverse national approaches and to develop a Europe-wide vision of how disciplines were studied and taught. With the gradual expansion of the countries coming into the Erasmus programme, and eventually into the EU, cooperation extended to new partner institutions and participants could experience the rich diversity of a broader Europe.

The participation of higher education institutions in the Erasmus programme was voluntary. Especially at the beginning, it relied mostly on the initiative and goodwill of individuals (teachers and administrators), who made the first contacts with colleagues abroad, developed good personal and professional relations with them, and set up discipline-based networks of institutions. Student exchanges were handled through meetings and correspondence, by mail and fax, and problems were solved through mutual trust and confidence. In those years, the people involved in student exchanges learned how to work with colleagues from different countries and different cultures – often using different languages – and realised how rewarding it was to be engaged in international cooperation activities.

Students responded enthusiastically to the new opportunity to spend a period abroad in another university, with the recognition of their studies. Since the places available were initially limited, the students selected were usually highly qualified and received much individual attention from the coordinators of the home and host institutions. Their desire to have a personal and cultural experience abroad quickly involved them in the pioneering atmosphere of those early years, when everything was new and had to be organised from scratch.

Due to the new requirements of EU programmes, the management of international activities gradually moved from individual academics to the central administration, and higher education institutions made some organisational changes to meet the growing demands of international cooperation – although the initiative largely continued to be in the hands of motivated individuals. In the 1990s, new offices, specifically concerned with international activities and requiring new professional skills, were set up; transparent student selection procedures were adopted; and the academics responsible for student mobility were asked to handle the recognition of studies abroad using a well-grounded and consistent approach.

Even though the diversity of partner institutions was accepted and explored with curiosity, the difficulties of moving students from one higher education system to another, and back, were also clearly perceived. It was often hard to identify the most appropriate study programme for a student in a host institution, where the degree structure was different and study programmes were organized in a different way; it was also difficult to recognize the outcomes of these studies and incorporate them into the home programme, when the course descriptions of the host institution were inadequate: decisions were mainly based on personal contacts and required the utmost flexibility.

II. **Convergence**

Meanwhile, in most European countries higher education had gradually expanded its target from the elites to broader social strata, and some governments had become aware that this transformation required a radical reform of their higher education systems. These governments also realized that, given the inter-institutional cooperation already going on across Europe, it would be useful to develop such reforms together, laying the foundations of a European higher education area where such cooperation could take place more easily. Also because of the impulse of their institutions and Rectors' conferences, they decided to act together and started a process of voluntary convergence of their systems. The first joint declaration[3] was signed by the Ministers of Education of France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom at the Sorbonne on May 25, 1998, eleven years after the beginning of the

[3] "Joint declaration on harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system" (Paris, the Sorbonne, 25 May 1998), http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/1998_Sorbonne/61/2/1998_Sorbonne_Declaration_English_552612.pdf.

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Erasmus programme. This government-driven convergence process, based on inter-governmental agreements, easily overlapped with – and greatly contributed to – the EU-driven cooperation activities based on inter-institutional agreements. In fact, the countries that were involved in the process clearly stated that their main goal in creating a European higher education area was promoting the mobility of students and graduates – which was also at the core of the cooperation programmes.

About a year later (June 19, 1999) the Ministers of Education of 29 European countries (15EU+14) gathered in Bologna to sign the Bologna Declaration,[4] in which they formally expressed their support for the common goal of establishing a European Higher Education Area by the year 2010 and committed themselves to coordinating their policies in order to reach common objectives. In the following years other European countries joined the process, up to the present 48 members. Their eligibility was based on their being part of the European region, as defined by the Council of Europe (CoE), and having signed the CoE European Cultural Convention.

From the very beginning a support structure, called Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), was set up to organise further meetings of the Ministers every two years and coordinate the activities taking place in between them. The BFUG included representatives of the participating countries as full members, while several international organizations and the representatives of major stakeholders in higher education were invited to join in as consultative members, to expand the scope of the initiative. The European Commission first joined the BFUG with a consultative role, but soon became a full member, offering a valuable contribution of experience in European educational programmes and funding several activities within the process. After each meeting, held in a different European location, the Ministers issued a joint communiqué to state the progress made in the convergence process and to define new objectives. In each semester, the BFUG was co-chaired by the country holding the EU presidency and a non-EU country designated by applying an alphabetical order. Secretariat services were provided by the country that had committed itself to hosting the following Ministerial Conference.

As planned, in 2010 the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was officially launched, and a second formal declaration – the Budapest-Vienna Declaration- was signed by the Ministers.

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[4] "The European Higher Education Area: The Bologna Declaration, 19 June 1999," http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/1999_Bologna_Declaration_English_553028.pdf.

Last year, the 20th anniversary of the first joint declaration was celebrated in Paris at the Sorbonne. In the current year, 2019, the Bologna declaration will be celebrated in the University where that document was originally signed. Therefore, it could be the right time to look back at this long and articulated process and try to provide a more general picture of it. Accordingly, we identify four main areas of convergence that have largely shaped the EHEA: **shared principles, parallel actions/structural reforms, agreed policies and common tools**.

II.1. *Principles*

Three basic **principles** of the EHEA are neatly expressed by the European Ministers in the Budapest-Vienna Declaration (March 2010).[5] They concern:

- ***Their own responsibility vis-à-vis higher education***: *"We, the Ministers, reaffirm that higher education is a public responsibility. We commit ourselves, notwithstanding these difficult economic times, to ensuring that higher education institutions have the necessary resources within a framework established and overseen by public authorities."*
- ***The responsibility of institutions***: *"We, the Ministers, recommit to academic freedom as well as autonomy and accountability of higher education as principles of the EHEA and underline the role the higher education institutions play in fostering peaceful democratic societies and strengthening social cohesion."*
- ***The role of the academic community***: "*We acknowledge the key role of the academic community – institutional leaders, teachers, researchers, administrative staff and students – in making the EHEA a reality, providing the learners with the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills and competences furthering their careers and lives as democratic citizens as well as their personal development."*

Another key **principle** concerns the ***commitment to a learner-centred approach in education***. This principle appears in several documents but is more comprehensively defined in the ECTS Users' Guide,[6] which was formally

[5] "Budapest-Vienna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area" (12 March 2010), http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2010_Budapest_Vienna/64/0/Budapest-Vienna_Declaration_598640.pdf.

[6] "ECTS Users' Guide" (Publications of the European Union, 2015), https://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/docs/ects-users-guide_en.pdf.

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adopted by the Ministers in 2015 in Yerevan after a careful revision process. According to the Guide, study programmes designed using ECTS credits are based on expected learning outcomes, which are defined as "*statements of what the individual knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process*"; and on the estimated learning time (workload), which is defined as "*the time the individual typically needs to complete all learning activities, such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, work placements and individual study, required to achieve the defined learning outcomes in formal learning environments"*. Moreover, the Guide suggests that study programmes should be delivered giving learners sufficient choice of content, mode and pace of learning, helping them to build on their individual learning styles and experiences, using effective teaching/learning methods, and providing learners with adequate educational guidance and facilities.

II.2. *Actions*

The main **actions** jointly decided by the Ministers, to be implemented in the single countries as **structural reforms**, concern the adoption of:

- *A common degree structure*, originally based on two main cycles and soon expanded to include the doctoral level as a third cycle (Berlin Communiqué, September 2003[7]): this three-tier structure was well described in the document "A Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA"[8] (adopted by the Ministers in 2005 in Bergen), where the cycles are defined through agreed ranges of credits and agreed general learning outcomes, generally referred to as Dublin Descriptors. In the last Ministers' meeting (Paris, 2018) an optional short cycle was also included in the European framework.
- *Common quality assurance procedures*, as described in another official document, **"**European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA" (first adopted in 2005 and revised in 2015),[9] that defines

[7] "Realising the European Higher Education Area. Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education" (Berlin, 19 September 2003), http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/2003_Berlin_Communique_English_577284.pdf.

[8] "A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area" (Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Copenhagen, 2005), http://ecahe.eu/w/images/7/76/A_Framework_for_Qualifications_for_the_European_Higher_Education_Area.pdf.

[9] "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)" (Brussels, Belgium, 2015), https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/

common European quality standards and offers appropriate guidelines for the development of internal and external quality assurance in institutions, as well as for the quality of the QA agencies themselves.

- *Common recognition procedures*, as described in the "Lisbon Recognition Convention"[10] (1997), already signed by over 50 European and non-European countries, which provided basic principles and clear procedures for the recognition of qualifications and periods of study abroad.

On the whole, the three documents mentioned above provide practical guidance for constructing the backbone of the EHEA: a common degree structure and credit system, with common quality standards and common recognition procedures, which would eventually allow for the smooth mobility of students and graduates in the area.

II.3. *Policies*

The **policies** agreed by the EHEA ministers were mainly intended as an indication to each government to steer its national policies towards common goals. With the exception of mobility, no quantitative benchmark was established for EHEA policies: governments were just invited to work in parallel towards the achievement of the common goals and report on the progress made in each country.

- *Mobility* came first, as one of the objectives mentioned in the Bologna Declaration (1999), and was steadily viewed over time as the "*hallmark of the EHEA*": countries were urged to increase student mobility, to ensure its quality and diversify its types and scope. Only for student mobility the Ministers established a European benchmark: in 2020 at least 20% of those graduating in the EHEA should have had a study or a training experience abroad (Leuven Communiqué, April 2009[11]).

ESG_2015.pdf.

[10] "Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region" (Council of Europe, Lisbon, 11 April 1997), https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168007f2c7.

[11] "The Bologna Process 2020: The European higher Education Area in the new decade. Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education" (Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009), http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/Leuven_Louvain_la_Neuve_Communique_April_2009_595061.pdf

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- *Lifelong Learning (LLL)* was brought in at an early stage, as the Ministers stated in the Prague Communiqué (2001)[12] that "*in the future Europe, built upon a knowledge-based society and economy, LLL strategies are necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness and the use of new technologies, and to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life"*.
- *The social dimension* has been high on the agenda for quite some time, with the aim that "*the student body entering, participating and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of Europe's population*" (London Communiqué, May 2007[13]). In the same communiqué, the Ministers reaffirmed the "*importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background*" and committed to continue their efforts "*to provide adequate student services…and to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity*".
- *Employability* is also one of the main objectives of the Bologna process. In the London Communiqué (May 2007),[14] the Ministers defined it as "*the ability to gain initial employment, to maintain employment, and to be able to move around within the labour market"*. They went on to say that "*each cycle of higher education should be relevant to the labour market"* and that "*further dialogue is needed between public and private employers, students, academics, higher education institutions and governments…*"
- *The attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education in the world* (Prague Communiqué, 2001[15]), was emphasized by the Ministers since the very start of the Bologna process. Later on, this led to a call on European Higher education institutions "*to further*

[12] "Towards the European Higher Education Area. Communiqué of the meeting of the European Ministers in charge of Higher Education" (Prague, 19 May 2001), http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/2001_Prague_Communique_English_553442.pdf.

[13] "Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalised world. London Communiqué, 18 May 2007," http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/2007_London_Communique_English_588697.pdf.

[14] Ibid.

[15] "Towards the European Higher Education Area. Communiqué of the meeting of the European Ministers in charge of Higher Education" (Prague, 19 May 2001), http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/2001_Prague_Communique_English_553442.pdf.

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internationalize their activities and to engage in global collaboration for sustainable development" (Leuven Communiqué, 2009[16]). In the Budapest-Vienna Declaration (March 2010), moreover, the Ministers stated they looked forward "*to intensifying their policy dialogue and cooperation with partners across the world"* .[17]

In fact, since 2005 the Ministers have viewed the EHEA as "a partner of other higher education systems in other parts of the world, for balanced student and staff exchanges and cooperation between HE institutions" (Bergen Communiqué[18]). A strategy called "European Higher Education in a Global Setting"[19] was adopted by the Ministers at the London conference (2007) and the first Bologna Policy Forum was organized in conjunction with it, where representatives of higher education systems from other regions of the world were invited to discuss issues of mutual interest. This dialogue continued in the following years and all Ministerial meetings have featured a Bologna Policy Forum since then, up to the fifth one held in Paris in 2018. It is planned that the next Ministerial Conference in Rome 2020 the Forum will be a 'Global' one.

Undoubtedly, steering national policies towards common goals in each country has contributed to creating more homogeneous learning environments in the EHEA, facilitating cooperation and exchanges among institutions.

II.4. *Transparency tools*

The so-called **transparency tools** adopted by the Ministers are also distinctive features of the EHEA, playing a major role in the mobility of students and graduates.

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[16] "The Bologna Process 2020: The European higher Education Area in the new decade. Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education" (Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009), http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/Leuven_Louvain_la_Neuve_Communique_April_2009_595061.pdf.

[17] "Budapest-Vienna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area" (12 March 2010), http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2010_Budapest_Vienna/64/0/Budapest-Vienna_Declaration_598640.pdf.

[18] "The European Higher Education Area- Achieving the Goals - Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education" (Bergen, 19-20 May 2005), http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/2005_Bergen_Communique_english_580520.pdf.

[19] "European Higher Education in a Global Setting: A Strategy" (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2007), http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/EHEA_in_a_Global_Context/24/2/Strategy_plus_possible_actions_597242.pdf.

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- The widespread use of the *Diploma Supplement (DS)*, originally developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, was one of the objectives of the Bologna Declaration. Basically, the DS is an agreed template for the description of qualifications in two languages – a widely used language in addition to the local one – with details on the higher education institution and the programme of study awarding it, which makes qualifications from different countries both understandable and comparable. A recently revised version of the DS template, and of the guidelines[20] for implementing it, was formally adopted by the Ministers in 2018 (Paris Communiqué[21]).
- *The outline of the ECTS Course Catalogue*[22] is another agreed template for the description of institutions, programmes of study and single educational units that makes diverse educational environments more easily understandable and comparable. The items to be described are grouped in homogeneous sections, and the required information should be provided in at least two languages. The formal adoption of the revised ECTS Users' Guide by the Ministers in 2015 made the production of the Course Catalogue more stringent for European institutions. Moreover, the Heads of institution who sign the European Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) in order to participate in the Erasmus+ programme commit themselves to provide it for their partners.
- The production of *Grade distribution tables*[23] for all programmes of study is illustrated in the ECTS Users' Guide and is also required for participation in the Erasmus+ programme. The tables are based on a statistical approach – illustrated in the ECTS Guide – which makes possible a fair conversion of the grades awarded to students in other countries/institutions/ programmes.

In the case of transparency tools, EU cooperation programmes and EHEA convergence actions clearly run in parallel and positively reinforce each other.

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[20] "*Diploma Supplement"* (Revised version, 2018), http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/20180205-06-Sofia/73/5/BFUG_BG_SR_58_4h_AG4_DS_ExplanatoryNotesRev_887735.pdf.

[21] "Paris Communiqué" (Paris, 25 May 2018), http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/EHEAParis2018_Communique_final_952771.pdf

[22] "ECTS Users' Guide" (Publications of the European Union, 2015), https://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/docs/ects-users-guide_en.pdf.

[23] Ibid.

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Although the conceptual thread followed so far in the construction of the EHEA is based on Ministers' official documents, it is essential to remember that the stakeholders' associations sitting in the BFUG as consultative members also provided substantial contributions, either as original input or in response to such documents.

- The *European University Association (EUA)* – now representing universities and national Rectors' Conferences in 48 countries – soon after the Bologna meeting and further to the merging of the Liaison Committee of European Union Rectors' Conferences with the Conférence des Recteurs Européens (CRE), showed its willingness to take an active role in the development of the European Higher Education Area, while reaffirming the basic principles of institutional autonomy and responsibility and asking the governments for the necessary support to engage in the required reforms. This responsible attitude was appreciated by the Ministers, who recognized the importance of higher education institutions in the Bologna process. Already in the Prague Communiqué (2001) they said that "*the involvement of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions […] as competent, active and constructive partners in the establishment and shaping of a European Higher Education Area is needed and welcomed*".[24] Another contribution from EUA are its regular *Trends*[25] reports, based on surveys carried out in universities and presenting the institutional views on the implementation of the convergence process.
- The *European Students' Unions (ESU)* – umbrella organization of 45 national students' unions from 39 countries – developed well thought-out policy papers on the main issues discussed in the process, such as mobility and internationalization, quality of higher education, public responsibility, governance and financing, and the social dimension of higher education. ESU also produces a report called *Bologna with Student Eyes*,[26] which is a reality-check of what has been agreed upon

[24] "Towards the European Higher Education Area. Communiqué of the meeting of the European Ministers in charge of Higher Education (Prague, 19 May 2001), http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/2001_Prague_Communique_English_553442.pdf.

[25] Gaebel Michael and Thérèse Zhang, "Trends 2018: Learning and teaching in the European Higher Education Area, 2018," https://eua.eu/resources/publications/757:trends-2018-learning-and-teaching-in-the-european-higher-education-area.html.

[26] European Students Union (ESU), "Bologna with Student Eyes: The final countdown" (Brussels, May 2018), https://www.esu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/BWSE-2018_

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by national governments on the one hand, and what the actual situation is for students on the other, providing stimulating remarks from the student side on the state of reforms in the participating countries.

- *EURASHE* – representing professional higher education institutions – also contributed relevant policy papers, analytical studies and other documents. Besides disseminating information, it plays an active role in organizing networking activities, learning events, conferences and seminars for the members and partners.

III. **Change**

The convergence process – of which the Ministers' Declarations and communiqués are the milestones – gave rise and continues to give rise to visible changes in national educational structures, as the formal commitments made by the Ministers have triggered a number of structural reforms. Several countries adopted new legislation following Bologna lines and introduced a three-tier degree structure, either replacing the old one-tier one or parallel to it; while other countries just strengthened their existing two-tier systems. All of them introduced an ECTS-based credit system, adopted the Diploma Supplement and implemented a quality assurance/accreditation system. In some cases, the reforms were introduced all at once, while in others a more gradual approach was adopted. The timing of structural reforms also varied greatly in the various countries, with some of them starting soon after the Bologna Declaration (like Italy) and others (like Spain) waiting until just before the EHEA was launched.

Italy provides an example of a comprehensive, radical reform of the higher education system along European lines. The new University Law[27] was passed in November 1999, a few months after the Bologna Declaration (June 1999), and subsequently amended in 2004: the traditional Italian long study programmes were abolished in favour of a system based on a first cycle degree and a second cycle degree, followed by doctoral studies; an ECTS-based credit accumulation system was adopted nationally; and awarding the Diploma Supplement was made mandatory for all institutions. Moreover, financial incentives were made available to institutions to develop integrated programmes with European partners and to promote student mobility. The reform, whose

web_Pages.pdf.

[27] "Italian Ministerial Decree No.509 (3 November, 1999)," http://www.miur.it/0006Menu_C/0012Docume/0098Normat/2088Regola.htm.

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implementation started in the academic year 2001-2002, also gave institutions more curricular autonomy, and allowed them to be more creative in designing or redesigning their study programmes within the new European framework.

It should be mentioned here that Italy enacted the reform law based on the Bologna Declaration so rapidly because it was ready for it. Over the previous years, the country had become aware of the need to reform the existing higher education system, in order to solve old problems and meet new needs, as well as to align it with the other European systems. For this reason, the Italian Minister had been one of the four promoters of the Sorbonne meeting in 1998 and had volunteered to host a larger meeting in Bologna the year after. Consequently, the European common framework was promptly accepted and implemented by the Italian government, though not without hesitations and difficulty in the academic world, as the starting point for a necessary process of curricular innovation and European cooperation.

IV. **After 20 years of change where does the EHEA stand now?**

Based on the last Implementation report presented by the BFUG, the implementation of the so called 'key commitments' – full adoption of the three-cycle structure and ECTS, of the Lisbon recognition convention and the Diploma supplement, and of a QA system based on the European standards and guidelines – is still uneven throughout the EHEA. As lack of compliance in some countries may be a serious challenge to the credibility of the whole area, a general implementation of the key commitments was urged by the Ministers last year in Paris and a structured peer-support approach was adopted, "based on solidarity, cooperation and mutual learning".[28] Accordingly, a special Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG) was formed, and has guided the formation of three thematic peer groups set up to focus on the three key commitments; peer-learning activities are being organized up to 2020 and beyond.

It is important to point out here that adopting new legislation or making any other type of reforms in the higher education system is only a first step in the implementation of the EHEA principles, actions and tools included in the key commitments. The second step is implementing them where education actually takes place: in institutions. In a report submitted to the Ministers in Yerevan, the BFUG showed its awareness that the first step "could be

[28] "Paris Communiqué" (Paris, 25 May 2018), http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/EHEAParis2018_Communique_final_952771.pdf.

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completed in a reasonable time and easily controlled" while "the second step, implementation at the grassroots level, requires a slow process of information and consensus-building in single institutions, departments and subject area, and is aimed at deeper cultural change,.… It takes more time and is more difficult to evaluate".[29]

Undoubtedly, most higher education institutions in Europe have undergone some sort of structural, curricular or organisational change throughout the Bologna process. This change has taken place with different degrees of involvement and consensus of academics, administrators and students and with different levels of human and financial resources for the achievement of their goals. Based on past experiences, some questions should now be asked.

First, to what extent have structural reforms really affected grassroots educational activities? In other words, even though all EHEA members have formally adopted a common degree structure and credit system, how deeply have their underlying principles – like student-centred learning – been implemented in actual programme design and everyday teaching/learning practice? How far has the agreed European QA framework succeeded in developing a widespread quality culture in single institutions and programmes of study? How extensively have the shared guidelines for the recognition of degrees and periods of study been applied to mobile students?

With particular reference to the key principle of student-centred learning, in Yerevan (2015) the Ministers reiterated their commitment to "encourage and support HE institutions and staff in promoting pedagogical innovation in student-centred learning environments….".[30] Again, the questions are: to what extent has this commitment been translated into action in single EHEA countries? And has this action really produced positive pedagogical innovation in institutions?

It rather seems that this issue is seldom addressed openly and constructively in the interaction between ministries and institutions, simply because ministries and institutions often do not have the same goals nor do they speak the same language. The former are mainly concerned with legislation and the allocation of funds; they need objective facts and figures to include in their reports, and are satisfied with the outcomes of the external evaluations made by QA agencies. The latter operate in educational

[29] "The Bologna Process Revisited: The Future of the European Higher Education Area" (Bfug report, Yerevan, 2015), http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/71/1/Bologna_Process_Revisited_Future_of_the_EHEA_Final_613711.pdf.

[30] "Yerevan Communiqué" (EHEA ministerial Conference, 14-15 May 2015), http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/YerevanCommuniqueFinal_613707.pdf.

environments that are a conglomerate of individual teachers and individual students, and are shaped by different discipline-related cultures with their different underlying traditions.

Rightly, public administration is accustomed to planning, monitoring and evaluation, but these concepts cannot be automatically extended to higher education institutions. Planning is essential to define realistic educational objectives and to give the academic community a common sense of direction, but too much concentration on planning to reach predetermined objectives may severely hinder creativity and flexibility in teaching, while introducing an element of rigidity in the learning process which does not allow students to build on their individual learning styles and aspirations. Monitoring and evaluation are also important for institutions to become aware of what has actually taken place in a given teaching/learning environment and to enhance educational activities, but an articulated framework of external achievement-based evaluations, possibly affecting funding or reputation, may lead teachers and learners to formal compliance with the requirements rather than to the open trial-and-error approach that should guide innovative teaching/learning activities.

Suggestions for pedagogical innovation may be well received by academics as an eye-opener, if the new ideas are shared with peers and recognized as relevant to improve the quality of their professional and international activities, like teacher exchanges or joint degrees. Therefore, the strategies to facilitate the creation of student-centred learning environments in institutions should be mainly discussed by academics among themselves and/or with experts in the field. In the Trends 2018 survey EUA has found different approaches to teaching enhancement in universities in 43 European countries, with greater participation in voluntary (77%) rather than compulsory (37%) activities. It seems that university teachers do not like to be 'trained', but may be willing to take the opportunities offered to them for reflecting on the learning process and enhancing their teaching skills. Therefore, such opportunities should definitely be increased in institutions and teachers should be encouraged to participate, while governments should play their role by funding these institutional initiatives and giving greater relevance to teaching in academic careers. Insufficient actions in this area may be a serious challenge to the real implementation of the main underlying principle of the EHEA.

Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the institutional implementation of the transparency tools – that are a significant aspect of the key commitments – is also uneven in many countries. Although they are required by the EHEA and the EU, the Diploma Supplement, the ECTS course catalogue and grade distribution tables are not yet universally used: lack of expertise, costs and

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administrative burdens are often reported as being the major obstacles. Here again, there seems to be a gap between national requirements and field implementation in institutions. In some countries, initiatives of national coordination providing guidelines to institutions have somehow filled this gap, providing standard models and examples of good practice, or expert support for specific cases, thus limiting the efforts required of single institutions. Peer-learning activities at the EHEA level could provide opportunities for exchanging these national experiences and reaching out to institutions in more practical ways.

A second question to be asked here is: have EHEA principles, actions and tools been implemented consistently by European countries and institutions? According to the BFUG report (2015), "the original European vision … has often been interpreted in different ways when used as leverage for national reforms", possibly because it "was not well communicated to or not well understood by all stakeholders in higher education and by other societal actors in the participating countries".[31] This statement can be supported by two familiar examples concerning first cycle degrees and the ECTS credit system

In the case of the first cycle of study, the Bologna Declaration states that the degree awarded on completion of this cycle should be relevant to the labour market, but in the EHEA countries this principle is not always interpreted in the same way. Already at the beginning of the Bologna Process Guy Haug and Christian Tauch[32] reported that in most countries more professionally oriented degrees offered by certain institutions in certain disciplines coexisted with more academic or scientific degrees offered by other institutions or in other disciplines, the general orientation being "not that first degrees should be just a preparation for a particular well-defined profession, but rather that certain dimensions required for nearly all future professional activities (transversal skills) should receive due attention". Therefore, they pointed out not only that the same principle is applied in different ways in different systems, institutions or disciplines, but also that a common denominator can always be found, if a basic principle is redefined in broader terms taking the diversity of institutions and disciplines into account.

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[31] "The Bologna Process Revisited: The Future of the European Higher Education Area" (Bfug report, Yerevan, 2015. http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/71/1/Bologna_Process_Revisited_Future_of_the_EHEA_Final_613711.pdf.

[32] Haug Guy and Christian Tauch, "Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education (II). Follow-up Report prepared for the Salamanca and Prague Conferences of March/May 2001" *(*April 2001), http://www.aic.lv/ace/ace_disk/Bologna/Reports/Trends/trend_II.pdf.

The second example refers to the adoption of the ECTS-based credit system by European institutions. The system provides that 60 credits per year should be allocated to course units on the basis of the student workload required to achieve the learning objectives of each course. In some institutions/disciplines, however, the allocation of credits is still affected by other factors, such as the role played by teaching hours or the perceived importance of a course, and there often is a tendency to focus more on workload than on learning outcomes. European institutions/disciplines should be made aware of these differences in the implementation of the basic principle, and a continuous exchange of good practice among academics should be promoted, to help them develop a common concept of credits that takes into account not only workload but also learning outcomes and teaching/learning methods.

Other similar examples could be provided. In general terms, it seems that inadequate coordination among institutions and academics in the EHEA countries may be a serious challenge to its success. In the past 20 years a common framework has been jointly defined by the ministers, it is now time for European academic communities – institutional leaders, teachers, researchers, administrative staff and students – to analyse the changes that have taken place in their institutions and compare interpretation and implementation trends. By working together they would be able to redefine or reorient the common principles whenever divergent interpretations and tendencies emerge. This was done for quite some time when the European Commission supported initiatives like Thematic networks, or a discipline-based project like "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe", not to mention the groups of European experts – like the ECTS/DS experts – who worked together to construct a common European credit system. Even when national groups of Bologna promoters were set up to work with institutions at the national level, they were given the opportunity to meet at the European level to exchange experiences and discuss specific issues of common interest. As these European initiatives have gradually faded away, the national dimension has taken over in the EHEA implementation process: the outcomes of international academic cooperation have been totally replaced by national implementation reports based on administrative information coming from the single ministries.

V. **Conclusions**

We believe that the goal of effective and consistent implementation of the European Higher Education Area can only be achieved through substantial involvement of the academic communities and greater collaboration among

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them across countries, institutions and disciplines. International academic cooperation has been going on for quite some time, but the context is now much more favourable, as a solid framework has been built by national governments and other major actors in higher education: common principles, structures, policies and tools are broadly accepted in 48 countries and major obstacles have been removed. We are confident that this shared vision and the wealth of mutual knowledge accumulated over the years have developed a sufficient critical mass to enable groups of academics, administrators and students from various European countries to successfully coordinate the efforts taking place at national and international level.

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An exploration of the 'African (Union Commission's) perspective' of quality and quality assurance in higher education: Latent voices in the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM)

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Abstract: Quality assurance of African higher education is at the top of the region's development agenda. Prompted by the imperative to enhance the quality of higher education, the Africa Union Commission is implementing the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM). The AQRM is a continental tool that affords higher education institutions an opportunity to conduct self-assessment and compare their performance against similar institutions based on a set of common criteria. The mechanism is envisaged to engender institutional cultures of quality and enhance the quality of African higher education. However, a dearth of knowledge exists about the latent notions of quality in higher education that the AQRM aims to assure and the implicit institutional-level quality assurance practices in the AQRM. Therefore, this interpretivist article, based on a review of the AQRM survey questionnaire, answered the following research question: What notions of quality in higher education and the institutional-level quality assurance practices are inherent in the quality standards of the AQRM survey questionnaire? The findings revealed that quality as fitness for purpose and exceptional are the notions of quality in higher education in the AQRM. Nevertheless, fitness for purpose is the dominant notion of quality and this symbolises an imperative to re-direct higher education to serve social and economic ends. Distinguished (excellent) teacher awards, applied research excellence awards, staff professional development, tracer studies, external examination, and the involvement of key external stakeholders in programme development are the latent institutional-level quality assurance practices in the AQRM. These quality assurance practices are in sync with the notions of quality and aim at bridging the gap between the academy

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and the labour market. Methodologically, the AQRM survey questionnaire is devoid of benchmarks to inform the rating, and quality assurance practices such as student evaluation of teaching, peer observation of teaching and moderation of examination items are unnoticeable in the survey questionnaire.

Keywords: Quality; quality assurance; perspectives; Africa; African Union.

I. Introduction

Higher education in Africa has – after over two decades of neglect triggered by the World Bank's neoliberal prescriptions of the 1980s – assumed unparalleled importance in history.[1] It is scarcely surprising that 'revitalising of higher education' are watchwords in the African Union Commission's education strategic frameworks: the Second Decade of Education Africa Action Plan (2006-2015)[2] and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) (2016-2025).[3] In the current development discourse, higher education is stressed as a key driver of socio-economic development[4,5] and a tool at Africa's disposal to achieve the African Union's vision of a peaceful, integrated and prosperous Africa.[6] Specifically, higher education is regarded as an instrument with incomparable potential to facilitate the region to leapfrog the current development challenges as well as to provide intellectual muscle to tackle future development challenges. This new faith in the potential of higher education stems from the conviction that it is through post-secondary education that Africa's human resources will be nurtured and developed, Africa-led solutions for addressing African challenges will be developed, and Africa will play a role in the global

[1] Karola Hahn and Damtew Teferra, "Tuning as instrument of systematic higher education reform and quality enhancement: The African experience," *Tuning Journal for Higher Education* 1, no. 1(2013): 142-43, http://dx.doi.org/10.18543/tjhe-1(1)-2013pp127-163.

[2] African Union, *Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015) Plan* (Addis Ababa: African Union, 2006).

[3] African Union, *Continental Education Strategy for Africa: 2016-2025* (Addis Ababa: African Union, 2016).

[4] World Bank, *Constructing knowledge societies: New challenges for tertiary education* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2002).

[5] David E. Bloom, David Canning, Kevin Chan, and Dara Lee Luca, "Higher education and economic growth in Africa," *International Journal of African Higher Education* 1, no. 1 (2014): 23-57, https://doi.org/10.6017/ijahe.v1i1.5643.

[6] African Union Commission, *Agenda 2063: The Africa we want* (Addis Ababa, African Union, September 2015).

knowledge economy and claim her rightful place.[7] This appreciation of the indispensable role of higher education in development rekindles the post-1960 idea of an African development university, a notion that was echoed by the former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his address upon receipt of an honorary degree from the University of Ghana:

> I believe that the university must become a primary tool for Africa's development in the new century. Universities can help develop African expertise; they can enhance the analysis of African problems; strengthen domestic institutions; serve as a model environment for the practice of good governance, conflict resolution and respect for human rights; and enable Africa academics to play an active part in the global community of scholars.[8]

Quality assurance is integral to the drive to revitalise higher education and research in Africa and has, since the mid-2000s, become part of the contemporary agenda of African governments, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Union.[9] The mutation of quality assurance from a peripheral to a topical issue in the higher education policy – at national, sub-regional and regional (or continental) levels – has been fuelled by the awakening to the notion that "today, more than ever before in human history, the wealth – or poverty – of nations depends on the quality of higher education"[10] and recent empirical studies that demonstrate a correlation between a country's productivity and the quality of its higher education.[11] Consequently, there has been an unprecedented burgeoning of quality assurance agencies, with 21 African countries having established quality assurance agencies by 2012 while several others were in advanced stages of establishing them.[12] At the African Union level, quality assurance is a

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[7] Olusola Oyewole, "The African quality rating mechanisms: The process, prospects and risks" (paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa and Capacity Building (Training)Workshop, Bamako, October 5-10, 2010),1-2.

[8] "Information Technology should be used to tap knowledge from greatest Universities to bring learning to all, Kofi Annan says," *United Nations Information Service*, published August 2, 2000, https://www.un.org/press/en/2000/20000802.sgsm7502.doc.html.

[9] Lazarus Nabaho, Jessica Aguti, and Joseph Oonyu, "Making sense of an elusive concept: Academics' perspectives of quality in higher education," *Higher Learning Research Communications 7*, no. 2 (2017): 27, https://doi.org/10.18870/hlrc.v7i2.383.

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[11] Bloom David et al., "Higher education and economic growth in Africa."

[12] Juma Shabani, Peter Okebukola, and Olusola Oyewole, "Quality assurance in Africa: Towards a continental higher education and research space," *International Journal of African*

strategic objective in the CESA and the continental political body is currently implementing the African Higher Education Harmonisation Strategy, which comprises a range of key instruments several of which are yet to be developed.[13]

The African Higher Education Harmonisation Strategy is an overarching policy framework that was adopted by the Conference of African Ministers of Education in 2007 and envisions an African Higher Education and Research Space (AHERS) along the lines of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) – an outcome of the Bologna Process, which started in Europe in 1999.[14] The strategy arguably symbolises a political commitment at the African Union level to improve the quality of higher education on the continent. The African Higher Education Harmonisation Strategy was a response to the vision of an integrated Africa, and endeavoured to resuscitate the Arusha Convention (1981), which envisaged mutual recognition of qualifications in African states, as a major tool for the integration process. The desire to synchronise the diverse higher education systems which have roots in multiple national and colonial legacies across the region motivated the development of the strategy. The multiple higher education systems – albeit with identical aims – undermine mutual recognition of qualifications across the countries and further militate against African integration and the unfettered mobility of students, graduates and academics across the continent. Therefore, harmonisation of African higher education is anticipated to establish compatible structures and systems to facilitate academic mobility and foster the comparability of qualifications. We need to add a caveat: harmonisation of higher education is not analogous to homogenisation or creation of identical national higher education spaces. Harmonisation of higher education is conscious of the national-level cultural and contextual peculiarities. Harmonisation of higher education in the context of Africa may be construed as the "narrowing of variance in structural factors, processes, qualification frameworks, quality standards, degree cycles, and credits."[15]

Higher Education 1, no. 1 (2014): 139-171, https://doi.org/10.6017/ijahe.v1i1.5646.

[13] Juma Shabani, "Quality regimes in Africa: The reality and the aspirations," *Chronicles of Higher Education* 4 (May 2013), http://www.inhea.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Quality-Regimes-in-Africa-For-posting.pdf.

[14] Lazarus Nabaho, "Developing generic competences in life sciences: The untold story of the Makerere University College of Health Sciences in Uganda," *Tuning Journal for Higher Education* 4, no. 2 (2017): 391, http://dx.doi.org/10.18543/tjhe-4(2)-2017pp389-406.

[15] Emnet Woldegiyorgis, "Conceptualizing harmonization of higher education systems: The application of regional integration theories on higher education studies," *Higher Education Studies* 3, no. 2 (2013), https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v3n2p12.

The African Harmonisation Strategy comprises a number of key instruments: the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA), the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM), the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency, the African Continental Qualifications Framework, and the African Credit Accumulation and Transfer System. These instruments constitute the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF), which was endorsed by the African Union Commission in 2016. The aim of the framework is to facilitate the creation of a harmonised quality assurance regime and procedures and is essential to the reinforcement of a harmonised system in Africa.[16] The development of a harmonised quality assurance and accreditation system at institutional, national, sub-regional and continental levels is being supported by the African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) Initiative – an initiative funded by the European Union Commission in partnership with the African Union Commission. The first phase of the HAQAA Initiative (2015-2018) was implemented on behalf of the African Union Commission and the European Union Commission by a consortium of five organisations: the University of Barcelona as the coordinator, the Association of African Universities (AAU), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the European University Association (EUA) and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA) of higher education were developed and published in December 2018 under the first phase of the HAQAA Initiative.

The Tuning Africa Project is a European Union Commission-funded initiative that was launched in 2011 and is intended to promote the implementation of the Harmonisation Strategy.[17] Tuning of higher education is "a collaborative process that involves major higher education stakeholders from specific subject areas in curriculum development to enhance student competences."[18] The tuning approach concentrates on generic and subject-specific competences, student workload (credits), teaching and learning approaches, and assessment strategies. The Tuning Africa Project, whose second phase ended in 2018, focused on eight subject areas – Agriculture, Applied Geology, Civil Engineering, Economics, Higher Education Management, Mechanical Engineering, Medicine and Teacher Education –

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[16] Peter Okebukola, "Emerging regional developments and forecast for quality in higher education in Africa" (Paper presented at the 2014 CHEA International Quality GROUP Annual Conference, Washington DC, USA, January 29-30).

[17] Shabani, "Quality regimes in Africa."

[18] Shabani, "Quality assurance in Africa."

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and involved 42 countries, 109 universities and 124 representatives, regional bodies in charge of higher education and students. A remarkable outcome of the Tuning Africa Project has been the identification of 18 generic competencies for higher education in Africa. Hahn and Teferra[19] credited the Tuning Africa Project with developing "…an improved understanding of graduates' competences that are relevant to a variety of scopes, prominently to the labour market" and that can inform interventions to narrow the gap between higher education and the continent's needs.

Finally, the African Union Commission, in collaboration with the Association of African Universities, developed the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) as a quality assurance (and assessment) tool in 2007. The AQRM is a product of the harmonisation strategy and aims at improving the "quality of higher education institutions in Africa so as to make them more globally competitive and locally relevant."[20] The rating mechanism, unlike the ranking schemes, does not list institutions in a league table[21] but, rather, clusters higher education institutions according to the quality standards.[22] It is, therefore, not implausible to infer that the AQRM provides "an alternative to the existing global ranking/rating systems that do not take into consideration African specificities"[23] and is skewed towards prestige – and status – building. The items in the AQRM align with the contemporary problems that confront African higher education and that were occasioned by the 1980s neglect of higher education in preference for basic education and massification of higher education. These challenges include, *inter alia*, capacity-building and relevance.[24]

The rating instrument offers higher education institutions an opportunity to conduct self-assessment and compare their performance against similar institutions in 11 areas and on 97 rating items against a common set of criteria.[25] Nevertheless, the African Union Commission–on a pilot basis–(has) dispatches panels of external experts to institutions to validate the self-assessment results and to provide external feedback. The rating criteria have

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[19] Hahn and Teferra, "Tuning as instrument," 142-43.

[20] Goolam Muhamedbhai, "Towards an African Higher Education and Research Space (AHEARS): A summary report" (2013) (Association for the Development of Education in Africa).

[21] Oyewole, "The African Quality Rating Mechanism."

[22] Shabani, "Quality regimes in Africa."

[23] Okebukola, "Emerging regional developments and forecast."

[24] Oyewole, "The African Quality Rating Mechanisms," 13-14.

[25] African Union Commission, *African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) survey questionnaire* (Addis Ababa: African Union, 2006).

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an institutional-level dimension (governance and management; infrastructure; finance; teaching and learning; research, publication and innovation; and community/societal engagement) and a programme-level dimension (programme planning and management; curriculum development; teaching and learning; assessment; and programme results).[26] The rating scale comprises five levels: poor (0); insufficient (1); satisfactory (2); good (3); and excellent (4). The AQRM addresses the African Union priorities in the Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education[27] and is hypothesised to support the institutional cultures of quality and consequently enhance the quality of African higher education.

Quality and quality assurance are now contemporary buzzwords in the African higher education lexicon and policy discourse. A series of quality assurance initiatives on the continent that are geared towards reversing the apparent deterioration of the quality of higher education are an overt testimony to the quality revolution in Africa. Generally, there is growing international recognition that quality assurance methodologies in any geographical location should align with the dominant notions of quality in higher education. Within Africa, a dearth of empirical studies on the notions or perceptions of quality in higher education at supranational level in general and at the political level, such as the African Union, in particular exists. The extant studies on quality assurance of higher education at the sub-regional and regional levels[28,29] focus on the quality assurance methodologies rather than the notions of quality, which ought to shape and/or shaped the quality assurance methodologies or both. Therefore, we know little about the notions of quality in higher education at the regional level that the African Union Commission's quality assurance approaches aim at guaranteeing and enhancing, and whether the approaches are compatible with the dominant notions of quality in higher education. The few studies on the notions of quality in higher education are skewed towards the institutional and national levels. Similarly, there is a knowledge gap regarding whether the notions of quality in higher education at institutional level are in sync with the prevailing notions of quality at the African Union level. Finally, there is limited knowledge about the institutional-level quality assurance methodologies that are implicit in the AQRM and which higher education institutions could employ to enhance quality. The notions of quality in higher education and the

[26] Oyewole, "The African Quality Rating Mechanisms," 13-14.
[27] Okebukola, "Emerging regional developments and forecast."
[28] Shabani, "Quality regimes in Africa."
[29] Shabani, "Quality assurance in Africa."

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institutional-level quality assurance practices are latent issues in the quality standards in the AQRM survey questionnaire. Arguably, knowledge of the notions of quality at the continental level can inform a theoretical model for designing quality assurance methodologies which have a regional (or political) outlook but are sensitive to the underlying viewpoints of quality in higher education at both national and institutional levels.

It was against the above backdrop that the AQRM survey questionnaire was examined to answer the following question: What notions of quality in higher education and the institutional-level quality assurance practices are inherent in the quality standards of the AQRM survey questionnaire? The article comprises five sections. The second section follows this introductory section and sketches the methods of the study. The subsequent section presents the findings on the notions of quality in higher education and the institutional-level quality assurance practices that are implicit in the AQRM. Section four discusses the findings while the final section distils conclusions and makes recommendations in light of the findings and the discussions.

II. **Methods**

The article is anchored in interpretivism and the revised AQRM survey questionnaire (January 2014) was the sole source of data. We explored the latent notions of quality in higher education and the institutional-level quality assurance mechanisms (or practices) that are inherent in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was deemed relevant because it comprises quality standards on most facets of quality in higher education from which notions of quality were extrapolated.

Harvey and Green's conceptual model for defining quality in higher education as exceptional, transformation, value for money, consistency (or perfection/zero error) and fitness for purpose[30] served as the analytical framework for the notions of quality. This stance does not negate the fact that other notions of quality in higher education exist. For example, Astin offers the following five main conceptions of quality for the "modern university": the mystical, reputational, resources, outcomes and value-added views.[31] However, while Astin's and Harvey and Green's conceptions of quality

[30] Lee Harvey and Diana Green, "Defining quality," *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 18, no. 9 (1993): 9-34.

[31] Alexander Astin W, "When does a college deserve to be called 'high quality?" *Current Issues in Higher Education,* 2, no 1. (1980):1-9.

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differ in terms of the notions, there is evidently a marked convergence in the substance of the conceptions. We preferred Harvey and Green's model as an interpretive lens because Astin's conceptual model was developed prior to the emergence of the intrinsic dimension of quality in higher education and appears unresponsive to a plethora of the post-1980s changes in the higher education landscape. This partly explicates the occasional use of the model in studies on quality assurance in higher education. We inductively derived the implicit institutional quality assurance practices from the questionnaire.

Content analysis–"a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from text (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use"[32]–was employed to make sense of the data. Qualitative content analysis examines the language in a text for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text into categories that represent similar meaning.[33] Open coding was used, where notes and headings were written in the AQRM questionnaire while being read. Categories and themes were derived from the notes in the questionnaire.

III. **Results**

This section presents the results on the notions of quality in higher education and the institutional-level quality assurance practices that were discerned from the AQRM survey questionnaire (2014).

III.1. *Notions of Quality in Higher Education*

As observed in the previous section, Harvey and Green's conceptual model for defining quality in higher education was used to identify the notions of quality in higher education from the AQRM survey questionnaire.

Fitness for purpose

Fitness for purpose as a notion of quality in higher education oscillates between two variants. The first variant is inward-looking (or mission-based)

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[32] Klaus Krippendorff K., *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (2nd ed.) (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2004), 18-19.

[33] Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, "Three approaches to qualitative content analysis," *Qualitative Health Research* 15, no. 9 (2005): 1277-1288.

and hinges on either the extent to which a higher education institution achieves its mission or a study programme realises its objectives. The focus of this notion is, therefore, the mission of a higher education institution, which may be diametrical to the purpose of higher education in a particular geographical space. Conversely, the final variant pertains to the nexus between a higher education institution's triple missions and the labour market or industry. Therefore, higher education is seen as having a utilitarian or functional role. Under this variant, quality is implied if higher education meets the contemporary and future needs of the customers, notably the employers and governments. However, it ought to be noted that the mission – the *raison d'être* of a higher education institution – may, in some instances, be externally leaning and thus blur the dividing line between the mission-based and externally-referenced fitness for purpose. The congruence between the mission of the institutions and the needs of the labour market brings another dimension to the quality discourse that is referred to as 'fitness of purpose'. Both variants of fitness for purpose are apparent in the AQRM survey questionnaire, though in varying degrees.

The mission-driven fitness for purpose, though present, is thin in the AQRM survey questionnaire. A single statement which points to fitness for purpose could be isolated from the survey questionnaire. Statement 7.1 under Section 3.1 (programme planning and management) requires institutions to rate themselves on the extent to which "the programme is aligned with the overall mission and vision".[34] The alignment may indirectly contribute to the realisation of the mission and, therefore, alludes to the fitness for purpose of the programme.

In relation to the externally referenced fitness for purpose, the AQRM survey questionnaire has a series of sections and data collection questions/ statements that lean towards fitness for purpose. First, section 1.8 of the questionnaire is titled "Linkage with the industry sector" and the questionnaire interrogates the nexus (or lack of it) between the higher education institutions and the industrial sector. The question is: "How would you rate the sufficiency of the following linkages with the industry sector in your institution: (a) Responsiveness of curricula to industry and employer participation in curriculum design? (b) Tracer studies/survey of graduates and their employers? (c) Collaborative research undertakings to solve industry problems?"

The question suggests, *inter alia*, that there should be a tight coupling between the curricula and the research outputs of higher education institutions

[34] African Union Commission, "*African Quality Rating Mechanism,"* 22.

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and the labour market. The curriculum that is in sync with industry or the labour market requires that the voice of the employers–the consumers of the graduates–should be heard during the curriculum design process. Tracer studies which are part of the question can deepen the nexus between the academy and the labour market. It is likely that the imperative to narrow the gap between the academy and the labour market could have been occasioned by the need to respond to the endemic employers' concerns that the graduates of higher education institutions lack labour market readiness. Finally, the research function of a higher education institution ought to contribute to the resolution of problems of the industrial sector through collaborative research. This demonstrates a shift in the thinking that higher education institutions should not just generate knowledge for the sake of it. Rather, the research outputs should also be initiated by and be beneficial to the external environment of the academy.

The survey questionnaire comprises two sections which underscore the role of higher education institutions, through the research mission, in contributing to national and regional (or Africa's) development. Section 1.9, on pages 12 to 14, is under the theme "research and community outreach" and the attendant question elicits information on the "proportion of research activities that are relevant to national development".[35] The section unravels 'relevance' by affirming: "Research that would be undertaken merely for publication purposes in a reputable journal and with little regard to development needs is considered to be not relevant". The AQRM questionnaire visualises a higher education institution through the lens of both a national and a regional organisation. At the regional level, the higher education institution should be concerned with Africa's development. Consequently, section 2.5 (research, publication and innovation) probes whether the research policy of the institution "includes a focus on research supporting African socio-economic development, among others".[36] Similarly, the section elicits information on whether "researchers are encouraged and facilitated, using research and development budget, …to engage in research relevant to the resolution of African problems and the creation of economic and development opportunities".[37] The sections envisage higher education institutions with a pan-African outlook and whose research impact transcends national boundaries. Finally, under section 2.6 (community/societal engagement), the questionnaire interrogates whether "[t]he institution offers

[35] African Union Commission, "*African Quality Rating Mechanism,*" 12.
[36] African Union Commission, "*African Quality Rating Mechanism*," 19.
[37] African Union Commission, "*African Quality Rating Mechanism*," 20.

relevant short courses to the community/broader society based on identified needs and identified economic opportunities"[38] and, therefore, attempts to promote a bond between the academy and the broader society.

A central thread in the foregoing discourse is that higher education institutions should skew their triple missions towards social and economic ends. This imperative seems to be intended to curtail the existence or emergence of an elitist attitude in higher education institutions.

Fitness for purpose advocates taking institutional diversity into account while assessing quality to avoid the 'golden standard' trap which occasions an assessment of institutions with differing missions and of different types against a single standard. The AQRM questionnaire takes cognisance of this and uses the results of the assessment to cluster higher education institutions within the context of specific institutional missions. In other words, the ratings are only to be effected on institutions belonging to the same category. Therefore, research-intensive institutions may not feature in the same category as teaching-intensive institutions and vice versa. For research-intensive higher education institutions, the research criteria are weighed more highly than the teaching criteria. Conversely, for teaching-intensive higher education institutions, the teaching criteria receive a higher weight than the research criteria.

Fitness for purpose, especially in the African context, may relate to the fitness of the curriculum of higher education institutions for the African (Union) context. Question 36 on page 11 of the AQRM questionnaire interrogates what is covered under curriculum as trans-disciplinary courses or cross-cutting areas. Of the eleven areas or options, three (African History, African Integration and Pan-Africanism) relate to the African (Union) context. The aim of the course units could be to raise African consciousness and to decolonise (or Africanise) the trans-disciplinary curriculum. Specifically, African History and Pan-Africanism course units resonate with a generic competence of African higher education which was identified by the Tuning Africa Project (commitment to preserve African identify and cultural heritage). On the other hand, two curriculum units hinge on development (sustainable development and national development). This reinforces the notion that the teaching mission of the higher education institution, just like research, should be sensitive to development issues. Furthermore, tolerance features in the survey questionnaire as a trans-disciplinary course. Tolerance is particularly important in the African context. Intolerance partly explains the endemic civil wars which undoubtedly

[38] African Union Commission, "*African Quality Rating Mechanism*," 21.

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retard development in African states. Finally, the extent to which the curriculum reflects "positive African values…"[39] is among the quality standards under the broad assessment theme of curriculum development and stems from the perception that African values have been sacrificed by the education system. This, in part, accounts for the candidature of "professionalism, ethical values and commitment to *Ubuntu*" (respect for the well-being and dignity of fellow human beings) among the 18 generic competencies of African higher education.

Exceptional

The exceptional perspective of quality has three variants: exclusivity, meeting minimum standards and exceeding the standards (or excellence). Exclusivity connotes an exclusive, elitist or high-class education institution. The notion of exclusivity which is elitist in nature is untraceable in the survey questionnaire. The absence of the notion can be attributed to the post-1980 shift from elite to mass education and the current recognition that higher education is a right as opposed to a privilege. On the other hand, the notion of quality as meeting the minimum standards is present in the quality standards of the survey questionnaire. It can be argued that an institution has met the quality standards if it is rated **good** (3) and has excellent quality if it is rated **excellent** (4). According to the AQRM survey questionnaire, a rating score of 2.8 and 3.5 implies **good quality** while a rating score greater than 3.5 connotes **excellent quality**. Within the AQRM, institutions and/or programmes that register excellent scores for at least four consecutive years may become candidates for consideration as African Union Centres of Excellence. Therefore, two out of the three variants of quality as exceptional are implicit in the AQRM survey questionnaire. The AQRM hypothesises that excellence in institutional- and programme-level dimensions would translate into graduates and research outputs that are fit for purpose. The institutional-level dimensions resonate with the endemic challenges of higher education in Africa, among which are poor governance and management, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate funding, and weak linkages between the academy and industry. Furthermore, the institutional-level dimensions are associated with the capacity challenges of African higher education and explicate the inclination of the AQRM towards, *inter alia*, capacity-building as opposed to prestige, which is associated with

[39] African Union Commission, "*African Quality Rating Mechanism*," 24.

ranking schemes. It can, therefore, be inferred that the challenges in a particular higher education space inform the conceptions of quality and the attendant quality assurance practices.

It should be noted that the AQRM survey questionnaire lacks the benchmarks against which to rate the institutions on the extent to which they fall below the minimum (threshold) quality standards, meet the minimum standards or exceed the threshold standards. This leaves the assessors with the discretion to choose a rating option based on their subjective impressions. This design omission in the AQRM survey questionnaire requires attention so as to bring objectivity into the assessments.

III.2. *Quality Assurance Practices at Institutional Level*

Six institutional-level quality assurance practices were discerned from the AQRM survey questionnaire: teaching excellence (or distinguished teacher) awards; staff professional development; rewarding applied research; tracer studies; external examination; and the involvement of external stakeholders in curriculum development.

Distinguished (or excellent) teacher awards

The AQRM survey questionnaire has a quality standard that points to distinguished (or excellent) teacher awards as an internal quality assurance methodology. Specifically, statement 4.1 under the broad thematic area of teaching and learning assesses the extent to which "[t]he institution encourages and rewards teaching and learning innovation".[40] Rewarding teaching excellence is an attempt to encourage good teaching practices and to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Staff professional development

Staff professional development features in the AQRM survey questionnaire. The first area of staff professional development pertains to the teaching (and learning) mission of a higher education institution. Statement 4.2 probes whether "[t]he institution has procedures in place to

[40] African Union Commission, "*African Quality Rating Mechanism*," 18.

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support the induction to teaching, pedagogy, counselling and the upgrading of staff teaching and learning skills through continuing education and lifelong learning".[41] The capacity development initiatives in the excerpt suggest that staff development is necessary for the delivery of high-quality teaching and learning. As far as the research mission is concerned, statement 5.4 probes whether "the institution has procedures in place to support academic staff to develop and enhance their research skills, including collaborative research and publication"[42] and therefore alludes to staff development.

Rewarding research

Rewarding applied research whose outputs are used by society to solve problems is an implicit institutional-level quality assurance practice in the AQRM survey questionnaire. Statement 5.8 of the AQRM survey questionnaire states that "the institution…rewards research whose results are used by society".[43] This seems to be a deliberate attempt to re-direct research to serving social and economic ends and is at odds with the basic research paradigm.

Tracer studies

Tracer studies are identifiable in the AQRM survey questionnaire. Question 37 of the AQRM questionnaire requires the institutional-level respondents to rate the sufficiency of tracer studies/survey of graduates with the industry sector. Generally, tracer studies are intended to elicit information on how the graduates of higher education institutions are doing in the workplace, identify flaws in the academic programmes, and establish whether the academic programmes meet and/or satisfy the critical needs of the employers. They thus serve as a quality assurance methodology and are aligned to the fitness for purpose perspective of quality.

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[41] African Union Commission, "*African Quality Rating Mechanism*," 18.
[42] African Union Commission, "*African Quality Rating Mechanism*," 19.
[43] African Union Commission, "*African Quality Rating Mechanism*," 20.

External examination

External examination as a quality assurance practice in higher education is apparent in the AQRM survey questionnaire. The practice is explicit under the teaching and learning dimension of the questionnaire that pertains to assessment. Specifically, statement 10.1 provides for an assessment as to whether "[t]he institution has systems in place for external examination".[44] External examination is intended to provide an external glimpse into students' assessment and to gauge whether the marking of scripts is objective and the assessment items measure up to the level being assessed.

Involvement of key external stakeholders in curriculum development

The drive towards narrowing the gap between the training programmes of higher education institutions and the needs of the labour market necessitates the involvement of employers in the curriculum development and review processes. The gap between the curriculum and the needs of the labour market partly explicates the lack of work readiness of the graduates. Under the programme planning and management component of the AQRM survey questionnaire, statement 8.6– "Curriculum development has been informed by thorough research and consultation with relevant stakeholders including public sector planners, industry and other employers"[45] – relates to the involvement of external stakeholders in the curriculum development process. The purpose is to ensure that the curriculum is relevant to the world of work. A curriculum which is relevant to the labour market, if supplemented by effective and adequate resources, is likely to produce graduates who are responsive to the demands of the labour market.

IV. **Discussion**

The AQRM survey questionnaire is aligned to the traditional (exceptional) and contemporary (fitness for purpose) notions of quality. Whereas all the variants of fitness for purpose could be isolated from the AQRM, two out of the three variants of quality as exceptional – namely meeting minimum standards and excellence – were implicit in the rating mechanism. The

[44] African Union Commission, "*African Quality Rating Mechanism*," 25.
[45] African Union Commission, "*African Quality Rating Mechanism*," 24.

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findings on the perspectives of quality that are implicit in the AQRM lend credence to Oyewole[46] who asserted that fitness for purpose and excellence are among the hallmarks of the AQRM. Nevertheless, fitness for purpose is the dominant notion of quality in higher education. The results are in sync with the extant studies on the perceptions of quality assurance at institution level which revealed that academics perceive quality as fitness for purpose and exceptional.[47] The convergence in the notions of quality at the African Union and institutional levels has the potential to enhance the adoption of the AQRM by higher education institutions. The chances of the adoption of a quality assurance methodology are fewer if it is not aligned to the notions of quality in higher education in a particular higher education space.

The exclusivity variant of exceptional was latent in the tool. The drive to increase the participation rates in higher education and the shift from elite to mass higher education, coupled with the norm-referenced nature of exclusivity, could account for the lack of traces of it in the AQRM. The AQRM survey questionnaire is criterion-referenced (or standards-based) and is unlikely to accommodate an overly norm-referenced notion of quality which assumes that inaccessibility of the elite education implies quality.

The survey questionnaire does not provide explicit benchmarks to inform self-rating by institutions and validation of the results by the African Union Commission. In some instances, it comprises generic and subjective words such as 'sufficient', 'appropriate' and 'in line with acceptable norms'. The five levels of assessment (poor, insufficient, satisfactory, good and excellent) do not provide standards-based descriptors. If excellence connotes exceeding minimum quality standards, then it is logical that the level descriptors are provided to guide the rating and to enable a distinction to be made between threshold standards, excellence (exceeding the minimum/threshold standards) and below the standard(s). For example on infrastructure, rather than a generic statement such as "The institution has sufficient lecturing spaces to accommodate student numbers taking the institutional mode of delivery into account", the level descriptors could have square metres per student for each assessment level and for the various modes of delivery.

The dominance of fitness for purpose could be based on the notion that "the definition of quality as fitness for purpose has shown to be potent in developing an educational policy and educational practices to help the

[46] Oyewole, "The African Quality Rating Mechanisms," 12.

[47] Nabaho, "Making sense of an elusive concept," 38.

countries climb out of their chronic and potentially crippling predicaments."[48] Africa's predicaments are explicit in the vision of the African Union and Agenda 2063. The foregoing discourse demonstrates that the political agenda at the African Union level informs the conception of quality in higher education. Therefore, quality can be a political creature. It could also be a strategy to re-direct higher education to serve economic and social ends, which it may be deemed to pay less to attention or to neglect.

The transformative or value-added notion of quality in higher education is non-existent in the AQRM. This can be explained by the difficulties in measuring and applying the transformative view of quality, that is, the difference between the input (student knowledge and competence before higher education) and output (student knowledge and competence after higher education).[49] Assessing transformation requires baseline data upon which the degree of value added (transformation) after the students' higher education experience can be gauged. We need to add a caveat: absence of transformation does not imply that the transformative perspective of quality is excluded on the list of the African Union Commission's definitions of quality in higher education. Transformation presupposes the "fundamental purpose of higher education"[50] and Westerheijden, Stensaker and Rosa[51] aptly argue that "[t]he aim of higher education, and especially of students' first experience of higher education, is to assist students to be transformed from adolescents with school-type knowledge into adults ready to enter society and the labour market at the highest level of competencies available."

Six quality assurance practices were discerned from the AQRM survey questionnaire: distinguished (excellent) teacher awards, staff professional development, rewarding research, tracer studies, external examination and the involvement of external stakeholders in curriculum development. The practices have the potential to enhance quality owing to the degree of alignment between them and the notions of quality that are implicit in the AQRM survey questionnaire. The practices resonate with the findings from

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[48] Nirwan Idrus, "Transforming quality for development," *Quality in Higher Education* 9, no.2 (2003): 141-150.

[49] Jens Jungblut, Martina Vukasovic, and Bjorn Stensaker, "Student perspectives on quality in higher education," *European Journal of Higher Education* 5, no. 2 (2015),https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2014.998693.

[50] Lee Harvey and Peter Knight, *Transforming higher education* (Buckingham, UK: SRHE and Open University Press, 1996), 14.

[51] Don F. Westerheijden, Bjorn Stensaker, and Maria Joao Rosa, *Introduction to quality assurance in higher education. Trends in regulation, translation and transformation*, ed. Don F. Westerheijden, Bjorn Stensaker, and Maria Joao Rosa (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 7.

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the studies at institutional level.[52] Therefore, the latent quality assurance practices in the AQRM questionnaire do not operate at cross purposes to those at institutional level. The rewards component of the methodologies (rewarding teaching and distinguished teacher awards) is intended to enhance the quality of teaching and research and is informed by the notion that behaviour that receives positive consequences tends to be repeated. The AQRM occasions a paradigm from rewarding any type to rewarding research whose outputs are used by society. This quality assurance mechanism is intended to narrow the gap between the research function and the needs of society. Teaching excellence awards are intended to enable the recognition and celebration of excellent teachers as well as the promotion of teaching excellence; to enable dissemination of excellent teaching practice;[53] and to symbolically acknowledge support for teaching, to honour excellent teachers, or to create teaching role models who can motivate other faculty to enhance their own practice.[54] Teaching excellence awards, if they are to work effectively, require that the dimensions of teaching excellence are identified. These may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. However, Gunn and Fisk[55] have identified the following generic dimensions of teaching excellence: planning and delivery; assessment; contribution to the profession; and reflection and evaluation. Rewarding teaching excellence could be intended to create parity of esteem of research and teaching. Traditionally, owing to the 'publish or perish' dictum, research is held in high esteem compared to teaching. The celebrity status accorded to research militates against improvement of teaching, which some academics may consider a kiss of death.

The range of quality assurance approaches at institutional level is quite limited in the AQRM as can be evident from the six quality assurance practices that were distilled from it. Quality is a multi-dimensional concept whose assurance should be democratised to employ a range of quality assurance practices. Quality assurance practices, such as student evaluation of teaching, which provide feedback to the teachers for reflection and

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[52] Ephraim Mhlanga, "Quality assurance in higher education in Southern Africa: The case of the universities of Witwatersrand, Zimbabwe and Botswana" (PhD thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 2008).

[53] Vicky Gunn and Anna Fisk, *Considering teaching excellence in higher education: 2007-2013: A literature review since the CHERI report 2007* (Higher Education Academy, 2013).

[54] Nancy Van Note Chism, "Teaching awards: What do they award?" *The Journal of Higher Education* 77, no. 4 (2006): 589-617.

[55] Gunn and Fisk, "*Considering teaching excellence in higher education.*"

improvement in teaching, are not traceable in the AQRM. Student evaluation teaching results serve as evidence for distinguished teacher awards. Other quality assurance approaches which are missing in the AQRM questionnaire include, among others, peer-observation of teaching and moderation of examination items.

It is now time to reflect upon the AQRM and assess the 'African' in it beyond the name. The AQRM epitomises a search for an African quality assurance approach to deal with the 21st century challenges of African higher education. Unlike the other quality assurance approaches that have been influenced by mimetic isomorphism (or policy imitation), the AQRM connotes an invention in the domain of quality assurance. It takes cognisance of the autonomy of higher education institutions to design and implement academic programmes but within the regional quality standards. However, it should be noted that all the institutional-level quality assurance practices mirror those in higher education systems of advanced economies and this attests to the internationalisation of quality assurance.[56]

The article contributes to the limited literature on quality assurance at the regional level. It provides insights into the African Union Commission's perspective of quality and quality assurance and–from the African Union Commission's perspective–the institutional-level quality assurance practices which higher education institutions in Africa should either adopt or strengthen to meet the quality standards in the AQRM.

V. **Conclusions and recommendations**

From the findings and the discussion, it can be inferred that quality assurance approaches in a particular jurisdiction do not take place in a vacuum. The contemporary problems pertaining to higher education in a particular geographical space occasion the notions of quality and the resultant architecture of quality assurance. The perceived decoupling of the missions of the university from society and the low human, financial and physical capacity of the institutions influenced the texture of the AQRM. Therefore, the prevailing context of higher education shapes the quality assurance practices. This suggests that the designers of quality assurance models for higher education, regardless of the context and level of economic development,

[56] Lazarus Nabaho, Jessica Aguti, and Joseph Oonyu, "Assuring the quality of teaching at Makerere University in Uganda: Practices and experiences of academics and students," *Alternation* 23, no. 1 (2016):55.

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should pay close attention to the contextual specificities. Secondly, the existing notions of quality shape the quality assurance practices. The tight coupling between the perception of quality and the methodology of the AQRM lends credence to this assertion.

The findings have further revealed design gaps in the AQRM survey questionnaire and specifically those that relate to the absence of benchmarks to guide assessments and the limited number of quality assurance practices for consideration by institutions. Against the background of the foregoing narrative, it is recommended that the African Union Commission should develop benchmarks and level descriptors for the quality indicators in the questionnaire to guide assessment and to guarantee objectivity of the assessments. Finally, the statements that are suggestive of the institutional-level quality assurance practices should be broadened to include practices such as student evaluation of teaching and peer observation of teaching.

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Is the role of academics as teachers changing? An exploratory analysis in Italian universities

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Abstract: University teaching is under pressure to evolve in line with the social, cultural and economic changes of modern society. This process inevitably affects the professional profile of academics since it creates an increasing tension between the traditional modes of teaching and the learning styles and professional expectations of students. This article analyses, both theoretically and empirically, the process of change of university teachers in the face of today's challenges. The empirical analysis is based on the Italian university system, which has always been characterised by an overall reluctance to reforms. This article presents a theoretical framework based on two dimensions, i.e., the teacher/university relationship and the teacher/student relationship, to investigate the evolution of the professional profile of academics as teachers on the basis of seven teaching practices identified in the literature. The findings show that, besides some limits that are specific to professional bureaucracies, the support of universities is fundamental to promote innovation in teachers' teaching practices, which are otherwise regulated and shaped only by their disciplinary community.

Keywords: Academics; Italian higher education system; professional profile; teaching activity; teaching innovation.

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I. The changing nature of the teaching activity

After decades of research supremacy, the teaching dimension of university is now at the centre of a renewed attention by both scholars and policy makers as an equally important academic activity.[1,2] This transformation inevitably affects the academics' identity. In turn, the academics' understanding of their role as teachers impacts on the organisation and the activities and contents of teaching itself. Thus, it is a key aspect in the processes of innovation and development of university teaching.[3,4,5,6]

In particular, there is a need to rethink both the contents and methods of university courses. This need has arisen more or less rapidly in relation to individual disciplines and is a novelty in the international academic community. Indeed, for many years, a strong emphasis was placed on scientific research as the main focus of the significance of universities.

There are various reasons for this change. First of all, there is a stronger and stronger need to educate students for a new complex future and prepare them for the uncertain, the unknown, the unforeseen, rather than for what is already known based on the knowledge gathered over the years (as in the

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[1] Marcia Devlin and Gayani Samarawickrema, "The criteria of effective teaching in a changing higher education context," *Higher Education Research and Development* 29 (2010): 111-24, https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360903244398.

[2] Alenoush Saroyan and Keith Trigwell, "Higher education teachers' professional learning. Process and outcome," *Studies in Educational Evaluation* 46 (2015): 92-101, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2015.03.008.

[3] Alenoush Saroyan and Cheryl Amundsen, "Evaluating university teaching. Time to take stock," *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 26 (2001): 341-53, https://doi.org/10.1080/02602930120063493.

[4] Ester A. Hoehle and Ulrich Teichler, "The teaching function of the academic profession," in *The work situation of the academic profession in Europe: Findings of a survey in twelve countries*, ed. Ulrich Teichler and Ester A. Hoehle (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 79-108.

[5] Lanqin Zheng, Xin Li, and Fengying Chen, "Effects of a mobile self-regulated learning approach on students' learning achievements and self-regulated learning skills," *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 55 (2018): 616-24, https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2016.1259080.

[6] Cristina Coggi and Paola Ricchiardi, "Developing effective teaching in higher education," *Form@re - Open Journal Per La Formazione In Rete* 18 (2018): 23-38, https://doi.org/10.13128/formare-22452.

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pedagogic-didactical tradition so far).[7,8,9] On the other hand, this renewed interest in civic culture (which is traditionally more widespread in English-speaking and Scandinavian countries) is associated with the need to adapt knowledge to the changes in production processes and professional figures following the evolution of the economic structures. The skills required to succeed are mainly the so-called 'soft skills' which complement disciplinary knowledge.[10,11] These specifically involve team-work skills, communication skills, leadership skills, decision-making skills and problem-solving skills. The need to review the educational provision of universities also results from the requirements established by quality assurance agencies and assessment mechanisms whereon an increasing share of direct (public) and indirect (private, prestige-based) funding is based.[12] This results in the need to maintain a positive ratio between enrolled students and graduates, thus decreasing the number of drop-outs.

This combination of reasons also stems from the growing attention to the problem of matching the educational offer to students' different characteristics. This issue – although not new, as it arose with the exponential spread of the aggregate demand of HE in the 1960s – has become relevant again in relation to the characteristics rather than the diversification of the offer (different parallel sources or more levels in sequence), as previously. Hence, the experimentation of different curricula, the inclusion of meta-disciplines, the combination of on-site and distance learning (MOOCs, blended courses), and, more generally, the spread of the idea that students

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[7] Larry D. Shinn, "Liberal education in the age of the unthinkable," *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* 44 (2012): 15-21, https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2012.691858.

[8] Ulrich Teichler, "Changing perspectives. The professional relevance of higher education on the way towards the highly-educated society," *European Journal of Education* 50 (2015): 461-77, https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12146.

[9] Helga Nowotony, *The cunning of uncertainty* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016).

[10] David Billing, "Teaching for transfer of core/key skills in higher education: Cognitive skills," *Higher Educatio*n 53 (2007): 483-516, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-005-5628-5.

[11] Fátima Suleman, "The employability skills of higher education graduates: Insights into conceptual frameworks and methodological options," *Higher Education* 76 (2018): 263-78, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-017-0207-0.

[12] David D. Dill and Maarja Soo, "Academic quality, league tables, and public policy: A cross-national analysis of university ranking systems," *Higher Education* 49 (2005): 495-533. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-004-1746-8.

must be directly involved in learning processes (interactive education, cooperative learning).[13,14]

The support of teachers plays a central role in the process of improving teaching. In many cases, a change in the traditional teaching methods is required. This change is not always simple, as the relationship between teachers and students corresponds to a specific perception of roles whose modification requires an adaptation effort on the part of both. If students are used to a passive reception of knowledge they will find it hard to acquire a cooperative attitude, fostering a critical reflection on the transmission of information in the classroom. On the other hand, teachers will have to use dialogue-based and team-oriented methods which are very different from the traditional conference-based lesson that characterises the frontal lecturing method.[15,16]

After analysing the professional role of university teachers, this article focuses on the teacher/institution and the teacher/student relationship as key factors in the exploration of the evolution of the role of university teachers through the analysis of seven teaching practices and procedures identified within the HE literature.

These factors were investigated in the Italian university system which is characterised by a Humboldtian nature, a Napoleonic administrative tradition and a strong guild-based structure[17,18] which can highlight the factors that both hamper and support the evolution of the academics as teachers.

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[13] Alexander W. Astin, "Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education," *Journal of College Student Personnel* 25 (1984): 297-308.

[14] Bo K. Choi and Byung S. Rhee, "The influences of student engagement, institutional mission, and cooperative learning climate on the generic competency development of Korean undergraduate students," *Higher Education* 67 (2014): 1-18, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-013-9637-5.

[15] Noel Entwistle, *Teaching for understanding at university* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009).

[16] Elisabetta Nigris, "Learning to teach: the pilot programme to improve faculty members teaching skills at the University of Milano-Bicocca," *Form@are – Open Journal Per la Formazione in Rete* 18, no. 1 (2018): 53-66, https://doi.org/10.13128/formare-22603.

[17] Burton R. Clark, *Academic power in Italy. Bureaucracy and oligarchy in a national university system* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977).

[18] Giliberto Capano, Marino Regini, and Matteo Turri, *Changing governance in universities. Italian higher education in comparative perspective.* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

II. **New roles of university and new professional roles of academics**

In this uncertain scenario, a potential weakness has been identified: the difficulty or even the inability of academics to fully define their professional profile in general terms of roles and responsibilities with respect to society and, more specifically, in the field of teaching functions.[19,20,21,22]

In fact, the general question about whether academics are professionals has been debated for years since professionalism is a term encompassing many elements. Everett C. Hughes made a distinction between scientist, who do not have clients and professionals who do. Consequently, academics as scientists do not clients and therefore are not professionals, but in their role as teachers they have students. Hence, the subsequent question is whether students can be considered as clients. One position maintains that they are not really clients since "university faculties are experts in their various disciplines and not in teaching, which finds institutionalized expression in the fact that they are neither trained nor licensed to teach". [23,24]

Nevertheless, for the majority of authors the academic staff is included into the so called "person professions" together with those in fields like medicine, law and religion. Here the relationship between professional and client is crucial and implies the trust of clients as well as of the community through the professional's competence, integrity and ethics.[25] "For instance, norms covering client relations dictate that the professional be impersonal and objective (limit the relationship to the technical task and hand, avoid emotional involvement), and impartial (not discriminate, give equal service regardless of personal sentiment)".[26]

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[19] Peter M. Blau, *The organization of academic work* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973).

[20] Roberto Moscati, *Chi governa l'università? Il mondo accademico italiano tra conservazione e mutamento*, ed. Roberto Moscati (Napoli: Liguori, 1997).

[21] Séverine Louvel. "Understanding change in higher education as bricolage: how academics engage in curriculum change," *Higher Education* 66 (2013): 669-91, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-013-9628-6.

[22] Ulrich Teichler, Akira Arimoto, and William K. Cummings, *The Changing Academic Profession. Major Findings of a Comparative Survey* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013).

[23] Peter M. Blau, *The organization of academic work* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973).

[24] Everett C. Hughes, *Men and Their Work* (New York: The Free Press, 1958).

[25] David W. Piper, "Are professors professionals?," in *The organization of university examination*, ed. David W. Piper (London: J. Kingsley, 1994), 1-18.

[26] Harold L. Wilensky, "The professionalization of everyone?," *American Journal of Sociology* 70 (1964): 137-158.

An ideological conception of professions endows university teachers with three fundamental characteristics: (i) the principle of vocation (the 'calling') which stems from the craft sector and the inherent value of work, (ii) the idea of 'universal service', intended as a pre-industrial protection of the 'social factory' from the disruptive effects of the market, (iii) the aversion to commercial scopes based on the conviction that a high social class imposes duties and confers rights (the notion of '*noblesse oblige*' of Larson-Sarfatti (1977).[27] The combination of these characteristics contributes to strengthening the individual bases of the professional ethos and accounts for the focus on the autarchic dimensions of self-management and self-regulation of this professional category, following the idea of solidarity which is traditionally claimed and often shaped into Medieval guilds.[28,29] However, this tendency somehow contrasts with the involvement of other professional figures in the organisation of the services provided to citizens which developed with the emergence of welfare systems and when the State started to be a client of professions. Therefore, in contemporary society, there is no place for community organisations such as guilds. Hence, in each country, the professional regulation systems that once were considered antithetical (such as bureaucracy, market and self-regulation) became compatible in various ways.[30]

However, it was also observed that university teachers tended to interpret the relational dimensions of the profession as individual aspects that could be generalised. Their relationships are perceived as resulting from novel decisions and personal engagement and not as the product of common institutional conditions. The lack of perception of a common professional condition and of an organisational cohesion corresponds to the traditional model of university teacher whose aim is to replicate the élites and pursue basic research, but it does not correspond to a fundamental characteristic of people-related professions: the compliance with the rules of professionalism.

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[27] Magali Larson-Sarfatti, *The rise of professionalism: A sociological analysis* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1977).

[28] Elliott A. Krause, "Les guildes, l'Etat et la progression du capitalisme. Les professions savantes des 1930 à nos jours," *Sociologie et Sociétés* 20, (1988): 91-124, https://doi.org/10.7202/001391ar.

[29] Burton R. Clark, *Academic power in Italy. Bureaucracy and oligarchy in a national university system* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977).

[30] Jürgen Enders, *Academic staff in Europe. Changing contexts and conditions* (London: Greewood Press, 2001).

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> *In short, with respect to the most of the relations outlined, the academic fits rather well, but the professor typically does not see the mas organized structures, as common conditions, but as individual decisions and commitments. On only one major trait does this pattern fail, that of organizational cohesion, but this is compensated for to a considerable extend by the frequency of interaction among academics, and the informal exchange of information and judgements.* [31]

In short, the emergence of mass HE and the new functions of universities contrast with this interpretation of the professional role, particularly in relation to the relationship between teacher and institution and teacher and students.

III. **The relationships between teacher and university and between teacher and students**

In order better to understand the evolution of this process, it is helpful to examine the characteristics that are typical of the academic profession. Like other professions, academia is characterised by a highly institutionalised individualism. Traditionally, its members were socialised within well-established institutional contexts (i.e., universities) that were intended as structures aimed at providing support to creativity and criticism. Academics were allowed to individually interpret their professional role in an informal regulatory framework built over time by one's peers.

The academic communities have encouraged their members to show their freedom, intellectual originality and quality, which are often acquired by building networks beyond national and disciplinary boundaries in individual paths. This results in the widespread pride of being able to ignore or control the power of academic institutions.[32] Thus, in a fully internalised perspective, the 'republic of science' is a place where it is possible to pursue collectively the truth in a safe space with well-defined borders.[33] Therefore, the university acts as an intermediary for individuals who are devoted to

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[31] William J. Goode, "The theoretical limits of professionalization." in *The semi-professions and their organization*, ed. Amitai Etzioni (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 266-313.

[32] Christine Musselin, "Redefinition of the relationships between academics and their university," *Higher Education* 65 (2013): 25-37, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-012-9579-3.

[33] Michael Polanyi, "The republic of science. Its political and economic theory," *Minerva* 1 (1962): 54-73.

altruism, truth and pure research.[34,35] The *relationship between university teachers and university* (dimension I) is thus the first level of analysis to examine the evolution of the professional role of university teachers. This environment, which is based on the right to self-regulation, on the freedom and the trust inherently conferred by society, and where the unifying element is a scholar's discipline rather than the university eventually did end up in crisis. In a few words, we can observe that the more advanced knowledge is pivotal in society, the higher the demand to acquire it and the more sought-after are the people who have this knowledge. There is thus a demand to control knowledge and steer its direction, whilst the domain of disciplines is called into question. Overall, this process marks a deep change in universities which are no longer intended specifically to educate élites but are increasingly influenced by economic and political forces. This results in a growing system of norms, rules and procedures that academics are required to comply with. This also highlights the process of increasing the autonomy of each university. This autonomy fosters new forms of coordination and institutional policies whose overall result – particularly when they are supported by evaluation procedures – is a decreasing organisational autonomy for teachers.

This tendency also impacts on knowledge transfer processes, as well as on professional skills transfer where students – intended as 'clients'– assume a crucial role. In this respect, a few peculiarities in the academic environment should be pointed out. Generally, in a professional job, the relationship with a client has multiple implications. For instance, the fundamental competences of a profession are: (a) the acknowledgement of the client's conditions and needs and (b) the provision of appropriate management of these.[36] In the first case, the issue is whether students are to be considered as the 'clients' of teachers, who are neither trained nor certified as teachers.[37] Yet one must take into account how the roles of teacher/scholar and client/student change in relation to the evolution of university functions. In the past, the relationship was between a scholar and students who were also supposed to become either members of the

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[34] Burton R. Clark, *The higher education system. Academic organization in cross-national perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

[35] Mary Henkel, *Academic identities and policy change in higher education*. (London: Jessica Kingsley Publisher, 2000).

[36] Henry Mintzberg, *The structuring of organizations: A synthesis of research* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1979).

[37] Peter M. Blau, *The organization of academic work* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973).

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ruling class or scholars and thus their teachers' peers. Now, the spread of the mass university seems to promote a relationship that is closer to a professional/client relationship (in a peculiar way, since here the client does not directly pay for the professional's services). Moreover, there has been a crucial change in the aims and expectations of new students/clients. Nowadays, only a small minority of students will pursue an academic career and join the professional/teacher community; and similarly, very few students will be part of the ruling classes or the intellectual élites. Therefore, the role of teachers has shifted from training future members of the ruling class or academics to providing professional competences to clients. All these transformations have produced a progressive transfer of emphasis from the teaching to the learning model[38]. This leads to a number of (so far neglected) consequences in terms of professional codes of ethics, internal controls and relationships between professionals and institutions, all of which clash with academic traditions and the understanding of the academics' role and identity.[39] Thus, in this framework, the new relevance of teaching methods touches on the sensitive issue of the proper functioning of universities in relation to the demands/expectations of society. This is why the *relationship between teachers and students* (dimension II) is the second level of analysis and it becomes crucial to investigate the new roles of university teachers.

IV. **The Italian reality**

It is believed that the Italian reality can be particularly fruitful since it offers the opportunity to investigate the demand for change and innovation of the professional figure of academics in a context that is traditionally characterised by conservative attitudes and resistances to changes. As already mentioned, three characteristics of the Italian HE system contribute to this: (i) the Humboldtian nature; (ii) the Napoleonic administrative tradition and the (iii) 'guild-based structure'.

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[38] John Dirkx and Anna Serbati, "Promoting faculty professional development: strategies for individual and collective reflection towards institutional change," in *Preparare alla professionalità docente e innovare la didattica universitaria*, ed. Ettore Felisatti and Anna Serbati (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2017), 21-28.

[39] Roberto Moscati, *Come e perché cambiano le università in Italia e in Europa*, ed. Roberto Moscati (Napoli: Liguori, 2010).

First of all, the Italian HE system has been historically influenced by a Humboldtian prospective, according to which the role of universities and academics stems from the simultaneous pursuing of basic research and education of future élites.[40] However, as already described above, the combination of 'research dominion' and mass education makes this dualistic balance increasingly fragile, and even more so in an undifferentiated HE system such as the Italian one.[41] On the one hand, the performance-based funding mechanism of universities and the career of the academics are clearly based only on their research performances. On the other, the teaching load and the student-teacher ratio within the Italian universities are becoming increasingly demanding as a result of mass education. These two opposite tensions inevitably generate negative incentives to the integration of the research and teaching activity, with unavoidable but detrimental effects of the former over the latter, as well documented in literature.[42,43] It follows that, despite the Humboldtian view of the academic profession, when teaching is barely related to the research activity (which is the case of undergraduate teaching), this is seen as 'something done for the institution', with a lower prestige of the former compare to the latter.[44]

Secondly, the Italian HE sector, as a component of the public administration, is characterised by a Napoleonic administrative tradition[45,46] which makes the formal adherence to the administrative process and uniformity the most important success criteria. This 'legalistic' orientation has often reduced the expectations of innovative reforms concerning the HE

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[40] Wiebke Esdar, Julia Gorges, and Elke Wild, "The role of basic need satisfaction for junior academics' goal conflicts and teaching motivation," *Higher Education* 72 (2016): 175-90, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-015-9944-0.

[41] Aynur Y. Kaynardağ, "Pedagogy in HE: does it matter?," *Studies in Higher Education* 44 (2019): 1-9, https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1340444.

[42] Peter M. Blau, *The organization of academic work* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973).

[43] Hugo Horta, Vincent Dautel, and Francisco M. Veloso, "An output perspective on the teaching-research nexus. An analysis focusing on the United States higher education system," *Studies in Higher Education* 37 (2012): 171-87, https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2010.503268.

[44] Donald Light Jr., "The structure of the academic professions," *Sociology of Education* 47 (1974): 2-28, https://doi.org/10.2307/2112165.

[45] Burton R. Clark, *Academic power in Italy. Bureaucracy and oligarchy in a national university system* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977).

[46] Stefano Boffo and Roberto Moscati, "Evaluation in Italian higher education system. Many tribes, many territories, many…godfathers," *European Journal of Education* 33 (1998): 349-360.

sector,[47] in particular New Public Management inspired reforms. These are indeed aimed at reducing the traditional freedom of academics in the teaching activity which becomes under the supervision of the administrative part of universities. In this view, the introduction of quality assurance practices has often been seen as mere additional bureaucratic procedures to be complied with in order to maintain its own autonomy.

Thirdly, Italian universities have been described by B. Clark[48] as "guilds-based organizations", in other words, realities in which the autonomy of the individual is strictly linked to the strong role of the various disciplinary communities whose power shapes their ordinary operation.[49] Key decisions are "in fact subject to pressure from the most powerful academic groups" [50] and academic activities are coordinated following a bottom-up logic based on collegial agreement generated within these scientific communities. Hence, the disciplinary communities exert a relevant role in relation to individual academics' reactions and attitudes towards external pressures and incentives.[51] Consequently, different epistemological and deontological characteristics generate different interpretations of the role of academics as teachers[52] and, as a result, different degrees of resistance (or adjustment) to the demand for innovation and change are produced.

In conclusion, these three features created a fertile ground in which resistances to change and conservative attitudes towards innovation are combined, as shown in some empirical works.[53,54] Moreover, the traditional

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[47] Giliberto Capano, Marino Regini, and Matteo Turri, *Changing governance in universities. Italian higher education in comparative perspective* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[48] Burton R. Clark, *Academic power in Italy. Bureaucracy and oligarchy in a national university system* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977).

[49] Stefano Boffo and Roberto Moscati, "Evaluation in Italian higher education system. Many tribes, many territories, many…godfathers," *European Journal of Education* 33 (1998): 349-360.

[50] Giliberto Capano, "Government continues to do its job: A comparative study of governance shifts in the higher education sector," *Public Administration* 89 (2011): 1622-1642, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.2011.01936.x.

[51] Tony Becher and Paul R. Trowler, *Academic tribes and territories*, 2nd ed. (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001).

[52] Michele Rostan, *La professione accademica in Italia. Aspetti, problemi e confronti nel contesto Europeo* (Milano: LED, 2011).

[53] Stefano Boffo and Roberto Moscati, "Evaluation in Italian higher education system. Many tribes, many territories, many…godfathers," *European Journal of Education* 33 (1998): 349-360.

[54] Giliberto Capano, Marino Regini, and Matteo Turri, *Changing governance in universities. Italian higher education in comparative perspective*. (London: Palgrave

resilience of Italian teachers is now being challenged by at least two related factors.[55]

The first factor is of national importance: since 2013 an accreditation and quality assurance process was launched on the basis of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) published by ENQA (2005 and 2015),[56] which focused on the way teaching is carried out at universities. The experience of other pioneering countries in the adoption of quality assurance systems suggests that the concrete effects of these practices be carefully verified.[57,58,59,60] Only in the future will it be possible to see whether the introduction of quality assurance will result in an improvement in teaching and learning or whether it will merely be a burden.[61,62]

The second factor, on the other hand, has a local dimension and concerns the launch of initiatives to improve teaching in some universities.[63] The common element of all of these is their voluntary character (with no

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Macmillan, 2016).

[55] Ettore Felisatti and Anna Serbati, *Preparare alla professionalità docente e innovare la didattica universitaria* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2018).

[56] European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), "European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)"(2015), https://enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/ [In English.].

[57] Lee Harvey and Jethro Newton, "Transforming quality evaluation," *Quality in Higher Education* 10 (2004): 149-65, https://doi.org/10.1080/1353832042000230635.

[58] Lee Harvey and Jethro Newton, "Transforming quality evaluation: Moving on," in *Quality assurance in higher education,* ed. Don F. Westerheijden, Bjørn Stensaker, and Maria J Rosa (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 225-245.

[59] Theodor Leiber, Bjørn Stensaker, and Lee Harvey, "Impact evaluation of quality assurance in higher education: Methodology and causal designs," *Quality in Higher Education* 21 (2015): 288-311, https://doi.org/ 10.1080/13538322.2015.1111007.

[60] Sónia Cardoso, Maria J. Rosa, and Bjørn Stensaker, "Why is quality in higher education not achieved? The view of academics," *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 41 (2016): 950–65, https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2015.1052775.

[61] Matteo Turri, "The new Italian agency for the evaluation of the university system (ANVUR): a need for governance or legitimacy?," *Quality in Higher education* 20 (2014): 64-82, https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2014.889429.

[62] Tommaso Agasisti, Giovanni Barbato, Martina Dal Molin, and Matteo Turri, "Internal quality assurance in universities: does NPM matter?" *Studies in Higher Education* (November 2017), https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1405252.

[63] Few relevant experiences have been developed when this research was carried out. Among them are worth to be mentioned: the PRODIT programme at the University of Padua concerning teacher training and teaching innovation, Bocconi Education and Teaching Alliance (BETA) mostly devoted to the use of new teaching methods and technological tools, and the teacher training initiative (QUID – Didactical Quality Innovation) promoted by the Sapienza University of Rome. For a more updated review of initiatives devoted to the didactical improvement in the Italian universities see http://www.fupress.net/index.php/formare/issue/view/1489.

obligation for teachers to participate) and their experimental character (specific projects that have not been made permanent so far). For the reasons highlighted so far, the Italian case study could be considered as a particularly fruitful reality to investigate the factors that both hamper and facilitate the evolution of the role of academics as teachers in mature HEIs.

V. **Research design and method**

As described in the third section, to investigate the role of university teachers one must examine the relationship between teacher and institution and that between teacher and student in the teaching activity. In the literature, very few studies on this topic take into account both relationships and even fewer in relation to Italian universities. A few exceptions are the studies carried out by R. Moscati,[64] S. Boffo et al.,[65] and M. Rostan.[66] This study, which is based on an exploratory approach, intends to fill this gap by analysing the evolution of the professional profile of university teachers. In particular, the research sets out to study the behaviour of university teachers in the main practices and activities of the teaching process, by investigating both the relationship between teachers and university (dimension I) and the relationship between students and teachers (dimension II). With an exploratory approach, this is the research question of this study.

Since there is not a shared classification of the practices involved in the teaching, some relevant empirical works have been analysed.[67,68,69,70] Biggs

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[64] Roberto Moscati, *Chi governa l'università? Il mondo accademico italiano tra conservazione e mutamento*, ed. Roberto Moscati (Napoli: Liguori, 1997).

[65] Stefano Boffo, Roberto Moscati, and Massimiliano Vaira, "The academic workplace. Country report Italy," in *The work situation of the academic profession in Europe: Findings of a survey in twelve countries,* ed. Jürgen Enders and Egbert de Weert, (Frankfurt am Main: Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft, 2004), 243-263.

[66] Michele Rostan, *La professione accademica in Italia. Aspetti, problemi e confronti nel contesto Europeo* (Milano: LED, 2011).

[67] Alenoush Saroyan and Cheryl Amundsen, "Evaluating university teaching. Time to take stock," *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 26 (2001): 341-53, https://doi.org/10.1080/02602930120063493.

[68] John Biggs and Catherine Tang, *Teaching for quality learning at university*. 4th ed. (Maidenhead: McGraw Hill Education, 2011).

[69] Alenoush Saroyan and Keith Trigwell, "Higher education teachers' professional learning. Process and outcome," *Studies in Educational Evaluation* 46 (2015): 92-101, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2015.03.008.

[70] Aynur Y. Kaynardağ, "Pedagogy in HE: does it matter?," *Studies in Higher Education* 44 (2019): 1-9, https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1340444.

and Tang[71] highlighted how processes, such as the definition of learning outcomes, the selection of the type of student learning assessment and module design, exert a major impact in promoting an effective and student-centred teaching for the contemporary university. Kaynardağ's work[72] investigated the 'core pedagogical skills' that university teachers should possess by providing three main dimensions of analysis, i.e. delivery (of knowledge), communication between teachers and the assessment of student learning.

Conversely, Saroyan and Amundsen[73] and Saroyan and Trigwell[74] reflected on two debated issues of the teaching process, i.e. goals, role and potential unintended consequences of the evaluation of students' opinions, and the relevance and impact of faculty development on the quality of learning and teaching processes.

Consequently, seven teaching practices and processes have been identified. Some practices are related to the 'pedagogical skills' of teachers, in other words, the delivery of knowledge (teaching methods), the communication between teachers and students and the assessment of students' learning, which have a substantial impact on the teacher/student relationship. Other practices are related to the organisational design of modules, in particular the coordination of teachers, the management of the study workload, the definition of learning outcomes and the faculty development. These are practices in which a teacher is forced to deal with the directives and initiatives of universities, although these have a direct impact on students. Finally, another significant element is the students' feedback, intended as both a bottom-up teaching improvement tool and an internal teaching control system. The association between the seven teaching practices and the two dimensions of analysis are summarised in Table 1.

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[71] John Biggs and Catherine Tang, *Teaching for quality learning at university*. 4th ed. (Maidenhead: McGraw Hill Education, 2011).

[72] Aynur Y. Kaynardağ, "Pedagogy in HE: does it matter?," *Studies in Higher Education* 44 (2019): 1-9, https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1340444.

[73] Alenoush Saroyan and Cheryl Amundsen, "Evaluating university teaching. Time to take stock.," *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 26 (2001): 341-53, https://doi.org/10.1080/02602930120063493.

[74] Alenoush Saroyan and Keith Trigwell, "Higher education teachers' professional learning. Process and outcome," *Studies in Educational Evaluation* 46 (2015): 92-101, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2015.03.008.

Table 1

Teaching practices investigated in the interviews.

Teaching Practice	Dimension of Analysis	
	Teacher-University	Teacher-Students
Module design and coordinating mechanisms among teachers (I)	X	
Learning outcomes and ETCS credits (II)	X	X
Communication between teacher and students (III)		X
Teaching methods (IV)	X	X
Assessment of student learning (V)	X	X
Training programmes for teachers (VI)	X	
Evaluation of teaching from students (VII)	X	X

X = relation between teaching practice covered in the interviews and the two relationships.

These teaching practices found in the literature were the main subject of 90 in-depth interviews with teachers in charge of modules in undergraduate courses[75]. The interviewees were academics at different career levels (full professors, associate professors, assistant professors) with at least three years of activity and with full responsibility of their modules. Interviews have been taken at the end of 2015 - beginning of 2016 during a field research sponsored by the Giovanni Agnelli Foundation and Italian Publishing Association.[76] Interviews were recorded, and the interviewees were guaranteed anonymity. The interviews were carried out in six disciplinary areas in order to take into account the influence of a discipline on the teacher's behaviour.[77] Based on the 'Becher-Biglan' classification,[78]

[75] By 'course' we mean academic (undergraduate or postgraduate) degree programme. By the term 'module' we mean a unit of teaching (subject) in a curriculum.

[76] Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli (FGA), "*La didattica in università: Una ricerca nelle differenti discipline – Analisi delle modalità didattiche, degli strumenti per la verifica degli apprendimenti e dello studio individuale*," (2016), http://www.fondazioneagnelli.it/2016/09/29/la-didattica-alluniversita/ [In Italian.].

[77] Tony Becher and Paul R. Trowler, *Academic tribes and territories*. 2nd ed. (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001).

[78] Ruth Neuman, Sharon Parry, and Tony Becher, "Teaching and learning in their disciplinary contexts. A conceptual analysis," *Studies in Higher Education* 27 (August 2002):

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the selected disciplines were Chemistry and Medicine as 'Hard-Pure' disciplines, Industrial Engineering as a 'Hard-Applied' discipline, Philosophy, Law respectively as 'Soft-Pure' and Management as 'Soft-Applied' disciplines.

Finally, although the selection of the interviewees does not intend to have a sampling value, it was conducted in order to take into account the differences of Italian academics with an equal representation of gender (44% female e 56% male), age, and geographical location of the universities, thus increasing the generalisation of the findings.[79] The interviews were carried out as face-to-face interviews on site. Each interview was conducted and analysed by two different researchers and then discussed collectively in order to identify relevant examples and main trends.

VI. **Results**[80]

VI.1. *Module design and coordinating mechanisms among teachers*

The level of coordination with colleagues in the organisation of teaching activities was analysed in relation to the relationship between teachers and university. Only 38% of the interviewees reported attending formal meetings with the teaching staff (scheduled and organised on the basis of internal rules) to discuss the contents of their modules with their colleagues. In general, there was a tendency to coordinate undergraduate courses through informal and unstructured meetings with the teaching staff.

> *#Law 12: «Module design is left to the autonomy of each teacher. Once the class schedule is set, teachers work in complete autonomy.»*

> *#Management 11: «The contents of the module and its organisation are established by each teacher in a fully autonomous way...»*

The interviews show a concept of coordination as occasional and limited to unstructured, fragmentary, partial experiences on a voluntary

405-17, https://doi.org/10.1080/0307507022000011525.

[79] Robert K. Yin, *Case study research, design and methods*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994).

[80] Below a synthesis of the research results is presented. For more clarification, some statements of people interviewed are reproduced. The excerpts of each interview have been marked to identify the discipline of the interviewee.

basis. The formal meetings are scheduled in an annual general meeting where each teacher briefly presents the contents of their modules for the following year. Significantly, in the cases where no coordination mechanism is reported (22%), teachers believe that this custom is anything but positive and that greater coordination would be beneficial to improving the learning process of their students.

> *#Management 7: «We do not have any coordinating mechanisms, but this would be beneficial for both students in order to avoid that different teachers overlap on the contents of their modules.»*

Concerning disciplines, the interviews highlighted that there was greater (mostly informal) coordination in the scientific courses (Chemistry and Engineering). In Medicine, where teaching practices tend to comply with models promoted by the EU, coordination is more widespread because of the integrated courses where several teachers give specific modules within a larger course. In this case, coordination is implemented and is often effective.

> *#Medicine 7: «In the teachers' periodic meeting we happen to talk to our colleagues about the main notions provided in our modules that will be used as basic knowledge in other modules. These connections are based on individual agreements among teachers. There was an attempt to institutionalise it, but it didn't work out.»*

VI.2. *Learning outcomes and ETCS credits*

The use of the Dublin Descriptors in designing modules and identifying the learning outcomes expected by the Course Council and the ration between the students' workload and ECTS credits are analysed in relation to both the relationship between researchers and university and the relationship between teachers and students. The Dublin Descriptors are general statements on the typical results obtained by students after completing a degree; these have been used as a way to identify the expected learning outcomes of modules and programmes. Although their use has been required in Italy by legal provision and has been included in all the official documents required to establish the content of modules for many years, the interviews showed that almost all the interviewees lacked awareness of how their modules contributed to the achievement of the learning outcomes expected by the degree programme. Moreover, a few interviewees expressed hostility and annoyance towards this type of tools, which are thought to limit the degree of educational autonomy.

> *#Engineering 12: «These things don't make much sense to me. A university student is supposed to conduct in-depth and high-profile studies. I don't like all this experientialism. You go to university to learn.»*

Another aspect concerned the balance between ECTS credits and student workload. What clearly emerged was that there were usually no established processes to assess this balance. The teachers considered their credits appropriate but without verifying their consistency. The opinion of students was not deemed objective.

> *#Philosophy 2: «The study load is never enough for teachers while it is always too much for students.»*

> *#Chemistry 1: «ECTS credits are often distributed based on the teachers' power and no other criteria.»*

The teacher is still in charge of establishing the balance between student workload and teaching. The lack of consistency between ECTS credits and workload is relevant, considering that only 26.8% of the students in Italy finish their courses within the time limit.[81]

In relation to the disciplines, the interviews show that in Hard Science programmes (Chemistry and Engineering), there is a good level of coordination, especially informal coordination. In Medicine, where the teaching model is mostly based on EU standards, there is a high level of coordination and seems to give good results. The level of coordination in Law and, above all, in Management is decidedly more limited.

VI.3. *Communication between teacher and students*

An aspect connected with the relationship between teachers and students that was taken into account was the availability and accuracy of the information about the module on the programme web pages managed by teachers. This information is normally available on the university's website; however, although there is often a common format, this information is far from detailed. For instance, the information concerning the assessment of student learning methods of the module is often too succinct, as only the examination type (written/oral) is mentioned without any further information

[81] Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca (ANVUR), "Rapporto sullo Stato del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca 2016" (2016), http://www.anvur.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/ANVUR_Rapporto_INTEGRALE_~.pdf [In Italian.].

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about the contents or the methodology of the test and the link between the exam and the learning objectives.

Nonetheless, a good level of communication between teachers and students was found in relation to the coordination required for organisational aspects (such as exam management, exam scheduling, management of classrooms and laboratories). This information is usually provided both in the classroom (especially with a small number of students with whom the teacher can have a direct relationship) and the evaluation questionnaires for each module.

> *#Medicine 5: «In the planning phase there are a few teaching-related meetings to address and resolve potential problems, also on the basis of the students' opinions.»*
>
> *#Management 4: «We listen to the students' opinions especially when there are organisational issues causing an exam, class or other activities to be rescheduled.»*
>
> *#Management 15: «We regularly publish online information about didactic organisation which is very useful for students.»*

VI.4. *Teaching methods*

The teaching methods were analysed by considering both the teacher-university relationship and the teacher-student relationship. The interviews showed how the teachers seemed to be aware of the importance of teaching methods and their impact on the learning process.

> *#Law 6: «When I start by analysing a case study, I see students are much more attentive. Compared to more traditional ways of teaching, it is a plus.»*
>
> *#Chemistry 15: «In a laboratory, students have to teach themselves. The shift from theory to practice is fundamental. We have often discussed this, but in Chemistry we heavily rely on independence in learning.»*

Despite this awareness, there is no systemic consideration (especially in the organisation of the modules) regarding the best methods to deliver the education programme. There are few opportunities to discuss this topic with colleagues and, especially, in the course council. Similarly, students are not very involved in the choice of teaching methods. The teacher who chooses his teaching method according to his own preferences. The interviews did

not reveal any mechanism to match teaching methods with the characteristics and needs of students.

Conversely, the influence of the discipline on teaching methods is very strong. In a few cases, this link with teachers of the same discipline in other degree courses and universities (which is not surprising if we consider universities as professional bureaucracies) seems to lead to a conservative attitude in teaching methods, i.e., it makes changes really slow and takes them out of the specific context of a degree programme.

> *#Law 3: «I do frontal lessons, slide presentations may be useful, but I prefer interacting with my students, I've always been accustomed to teach without them, so it'd be difficult to me to use them during class.»*

> *#Philosophy 11: «They are all frontal lessons, I decided not to use slide presentations, I read texts in class, it may seem and old-fashioned method, but my students appreciate it because they can no longer read the texts.»*

All interviews showed that classrooms were still a binding component in the selection of a teaching method. For instance, whenever there was a large number of students in the classrooms, teachers tended to choose a teaching method based on frontal lessons.

VI.5. *Assessment of student learning*

Another area which is significant for both (teacher-university and teacher-student) relationships was the assessment of student learning methods. This is the area where teachers are most autonomous. Assessment is central in quality assurance processes and is under the responsibility of universities and degree programmes. In general, teachers tend not to spend much time in reflecting on the best evaluation method to assess knowledge acquisition.

> *#Philosophy 4: «I use oral exams. It's always been like this»*

The reasons underlying the choice of a test method are often practical (such as the number of students in the classroom) and may be influenced by the traditional methods in each discipline. There are a few exceptions (more specifically in Medicine) where there is a sound reflection on the impact of assessment methods on the expected results and, especially, on the students' post-university careers.

In most cases, the choice of an assessment method is made by teachers autonomously. Assessment is generally considered by most teachers as a personal matter where the course coordinator has no influence.

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#Management 14: «These are decisions taken independently. If I choose always the same specific assessment method is because I retain this is the most suitable to evaluate students»

#Law 3: «University teachers are responsible for their choices but sometimes this leads to exaggeration because students – and not the teacher's narcissism – should be placed at the forefront»

There are also substantial differences in each discipline in relation to assessment methods.

Finally, as regards the nature of assessment, even though there have been various experiences of self-evaluation so far, these are still not very frequent, which points out how "summative" assessment (i.e. the assessment used for the final mark) is considerably predominant as compared to "formative" assessment (i.e. the assessment used during the course to test and improve the student's preparation).

VI.6. *Training programmes for academics*

Another area of analysis was the interviewees' opinions on the training initiatives for academic teaching. The focus here is on the relationship between teachers and university. The question sets out to explore whether the teachers were aware of possible training initiatives for teaching and to learn their reaction. This topic is significant in relation to the ESG (European Standard and Guidelines), where one of the priorities is the implementation of training courses on teaching skills for academics. The interviewees had different opinions on this topic: half stated that they would attend such initiatives, whereas the other half were firmly against these courses as they were deemed useless. Less than 40% of the interviewees claimed to have been involved in a teaching training initiative.

#Chemistry4: «The only useful training for young academics is research. I'm evaluated based on my research performances, not the teaching ones.»

#Medicine11: «I attended a course and I found helpful to improve my teaching skills.»

#Law9: «No, the university doesn't help at all. Teacher are assumed to be already skilled. That's the typical job that no one teaches you. At the very least, public speaking courses would be useful.»

It is significant that, in the universities where the interviews took place, there was no structured and widespread training programme for teachers.

Training actions were taken on a voluntary basis, often linked to and promoted by the teachers' disciplines, and always at the first stages of a university career. In particular, from the interviews, Medicine and Engineering emerge as more prone to training initiatives.

VI.7. *Evaluation of teaching by students*

Student evaluation of teaching was examined in relation to the relationship between teachers and university and the relationship between teachers and students. The interviewees tended to be in favour of receiving feedback from students in relation to their satisfaction and they believed that it was useful to improve their teaching skills.

> *#Medicine2 «It's critical. The offer has been improved every year based on the previous year's feedback.»"*

> *#Chemistry2 «Results are taken into consideration. Student reports are taken into account.»"*

However, there were some critical aspects and differences in the disciplines. The main general issues reported in this respect were: the anonymity of questionnaires, which is supposed to decrease the student's commitment while answering; the difficulty in involving students and the evaluation timing, especially when questionnaires were given in digital format before registering for an exam; difficulty in distinguishing between attending and non-attending students in questionnaires; the lack of qualitative comments, especially in the digital forms; the deficient information that can be gathered through the Ministerial format for the questionnaires; the students' lack of awareness of the feedback process. These criticisms, nevertheless are not detrimental to the improving effect of the results of satisfaction questionnaires (70% of the interviewees were in favour of them), whereas there is more resistance when questionnaires are used to determine organisational choices.

> *#Management 1: «They are certainly helpful at the individual level as an incentive to improve one's skills. Their use at the organisational level (for instance for rewards and punishments in departments) is dangerous for me.»*

The credit given by the teachers to the results of the questionnaires varies amongst disciplines. Chemistry and Management teachers are more collaborative, while Philosophy teachers are much more cautious.

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VII. **Discussion and conclusion**

As already mentioned, the profession of university teacher is evolving as a consequence of the new functions of universities.[82,83] The academic world is generally reluctant to change, especially when it comes to an external influence on individual autonomy. In the Italian case, the resistance to change is also linked to the characteristics of the Italian academia, which was traditionally characterised by corporative bodies (guilds) and their relationship with the central government, as teachers are also considered civil servants.[84] The picture emerging from this study shows that university teachers find it hard to change and adapt their professional role with respect to the relationship between teachers and university (I dimension) and teachers and students (II dimension).

Concerning the first relationship (I dimension), there is a need to overcome the characteristics and limits of professional bureaucracy where the control of professionals is limited to the standardisation of the entry-level competences or certain stages of career progression.[85] The interviews confirmed that academics, once they had acquired their position, tended to consider the coordination activities with their colleagues (e.g., when laying down the module content to establish the student workload compared to the other modules) as a violation of the teacher's professional autonomy. This is likely to couple with the traditional resistance to innovation of this profession. This reluctance and the limited ability to change result from the fact that the innovations (e.g., new teaching methods or the increasing focus on certain student categories) require collaboration among professionals and the capacity to adapt teaching patterns to new operational modes. When there is reluctance to change, the top-down imposition of innovative tools, such as the Dublin Descriptors or the ECTS credits, results in a mere cosmetic implementation with no real impact on academic attitudes. The

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[82] Joëlle Fanghanel and Paul Trowler, "Exploring academic identities and practices in a competitive enhancement context: a UK-based case study," *European Journal of Education* 43 (August 2008): 301-13, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-3435.2008.00356.x.

[83] John Dirkx and Anna Serbati, "Promoting faculty professional development: strategies for individual and collective reflection towards institutional change," in *Preparare alla professionalità docente e innovare la didattica universitaria*, ed. Ettore Felisatti and Anna Serbati (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2017), 21-28.

[84] Guy Neave and Gary Rhoades, "The academic estate in Western Europe," in *The academic profession. National, disciplinary and institutional settings*, ed. Burton R. Clark (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

[85] Henry Mintzberg, *The structuring of organizations: A synthesis of research* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1979).

only exceptions are organisational provisions, such as those regarding the communication with students and their organisational needs, that can be promoted by the top management of the university with little effect on the professional autonomy of the teachers.

However, the difficulties between teachers and universities are not only on the teachers' side. The data gathered in this study highlight that universities fail to support the teachers' increased interest in the evolution of teaching needs. In this respect, there is a missed opportunity in terms of teaching training and activities supporting teaching innovation, as shown by the interviewees' interest in this topic. What is more, the coordination and control activities promoted by the government and universities, instead of encouraging a change in the professional role of teachers, ended up fossilising or even undermining it. As indicated by the interviews, both the entry and promotion processes and the evaluation mechanisms focus on rewarding research activities. In this framework, didactical innovation and teachers' training when perceived as top-down initiatives or linked to quality assurance policies at national level, are often interpreted more as obligations determined by an intrusive bureaucracy than a cultural chance.[86] Nevertheless, unbalance favouring research has not discouraged any bottom-up improvement in teaching methods.[87]

The second aspect, the relationship between teachers and students (II dimension), should take into account the purposes and expectations of teachers. In reality, a two-fold tendency emerged in our study. On the one hand, the relationship with students encourage teachers to be interested in their conditions and the best teaching methods. This is reflected in the individual interest shown by teachers in the results of the teacher evaluation questionnaires and, more generally, in teaching methods. After all, the academic profession originates as a knowledge transfer process (from a person who has knowledge to a person who does not) thus, it is not surprising to find this attention of teachers to their students.[88] On the other hand, despite this growing interest, teachers are alone because universities fail to provide tools to help them to understand the students' needs in terms of leaning and to support teaching innovation in relation to competences as

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[86] Ettore Felisatti and Anna Serbati, *Preparare alla professionalità docente e innovare la didattica universitaria* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2018).

[87] Charlotte Silander and Martin Stigmar, "Individual growth or institutional development? ideological perspectives on motives behind Swedish higher education teacher training," *Higher Education* 77 (2019): 265-281, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0272-z.

[88] Peter M. Blau, *The organization of academic work* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973).

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well as investment incentives. This clearly emerged in relation to assessment of student learning: Italian teachers are free to choose their evaluation methods without questioning the consistency between assessment methods and learning objectives. This is in line with the traditional idea of academics, where one of the key features is the rejection of the role of students as clients, even to the detriment of meeting their needs and the changing of the teaching goals.[89] This focus on students is not codified and regulated by minimum service standards and therefore relies on the professional sensitivity of teachers whose key function is the transmission of knowledge. In this context, they are left to their own devices to establish contents, teaching methods and assessment. Nevertheless, this loneliness leads to problems that the teachers themselves admit in the interviews. However, the awareness is not enough to win the resistance of a considerable part of the respondents against teaching support programmes starting, from the willingness to favourably consider the training regarding pedagogical competencies as potential added value.[90]

Following the typical approach of professional bureaucracy, this lack of guidance is counteracted by disciplinary communities which provide theoretical approaches and professional templates. The data stress the impact of disciplines on teaching practices. The discipline has a greater influence on the relationship between students and teacher than the university institution.[91] In fact, the interviews showed that lesson planning, and assessment methods mainly depended on the teacher's discipline.

This aspect (i.e., the relevance of disciplines) determines the main limitations of this study and provides directions for further research. Limitations are related to the fact the interviews clearly showed the relevance of disciplines in influencing the teaching behaviours of academics. Therefore, there is much room for further research on the aspects determining different behaviours and different attitudes towards change according to the discipline. In particular, the role of disciplines in favouring or hindering teaching innovation is certainly a topic that requires further study in order to verify whether disciplines can be involved in the development of teaching policies to facilitate success at both national and university level.

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[89] Peter M. Blau, *The organization of academic work* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973).

[90] Aynur Y. Kaynardağ, "Pedagogy in HE: does it matter?," *Studies in Higher Education* 44 (2019): 1-9, https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1340444.

[91] Anna Bager-Elsborg, "How lecturers' understanding of change is embedded in disciplinary practices: A multiple case study," *Higher Education* 76 (2018): 195-212, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-017-0195-0.

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A model for the evaluation of competence-based learning implementation in higher education institutions: Criteria and indicators

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Abstract: Almost twenty years after the Bologna Declaration was signed, the extent to which universities are embracing competence-based learning is a topic of much interest. This article presents a comprehensive model for the analysis of the implementation of competence-based learning (CBL) in Higher Education. An extensive bibliographic review was carried out on the concept of competence-based learning and on each of its constituent elements, with a view to proposing a model made up of seven dimensions and a set of evaluation criteria and indicators. The areas reviewed were the legal and administrative context, the institutional context, the degree programme planning process (including the individual modules/subjects within it), teaching practices and their assessment, and the review and improvement of the overall process. This explanatory model can be very useful to universities, particularly from Spain and Latin America, for assessing their level of implementation of competence-based learning, and identifying their strengths and areas for development.

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1. Introduction

In the late twentieth century, the various changes that occurred in society and in the world of work demanded shifting from a culture based on qualifications and specialisation to one of professional competence and multi-functionality. Delors[1] summarised the guidelines for teaching innovation, which should be aimed at learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be, a vision that should guide future reforms in relation both to programmes and to methods. While this approach had been partially implemented in English-speaking countries, it was translated into Competence-Based Learning (CBL) in Europe.

Much has been written about CBL since then. Studies have fundamentally relied on an approach to the teaching-learning process that has sought to provide students with an educational foundation to meet society's needs in work, civic, professional and ethical terms. Some pieces of research have focused on the concept itself; others, on the importance of defining competences; some others, on the importance of distinguishing between specific and general competences; other studies have been centred on whether CBL can be taught and learnt; whereas some have dealt with competence-based teaching and assessment methodologies.[2] Álvarez[3] conducted a review of research conducted on generic competences over the past fifteen years. According to his data, the research concerns innovation experiences and their outcomes, training, competence assessment, conceptual frameworks, and regulations on competences.

Following the Bologna Declaration,[4] the Bologna Process raised the importance of focusing EU efforts on the design and implementation of Higher Education degree programmes using a competence-based approach. It involved actors at different decision-making levels, including national education

[1] Jacques Delors, coord., *La educación encierra un tesoro. Informe a la UNESCO de la Comisión Internacional sobre la educación para el siglo XXI* (París: UNESCO – Santillana, 1998).

[2] Verónica Villarroel and Daniela Bruna, "Reflexiones en torno a las competencias genéricas en educación superior: Un desafío pendiente," *Psicoperspectivas* 13, no. 1 (2014): 23-34.

[3] Pedro Ricardo Álvarez, *Competencias genéricas en la enseñanza universitaria. De la tutoría formativa a la integración curricular* (Málaga: Aljibe, 2016).

[4] "Bologna Declaration," 1999, http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/Ministerial_conferences/02/8/1999_Bologna_Declaration_English_553028.pdf.

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authorities, university and student associations, and Higher Education institutions (HEIs). Various follow-up meetings were held, and some activities were carried out conducive to the implementation of the goals and objectives proposed. They resulted in a number of stocktaking reports for the whole of the EU and for each member state.[5] Out of the thirteen indicators currently used, two of them are linked to the object of study here: the use of credits as tools that reflect student workload (ECTS system) and the development of a framework of qualifications in the signatory countries. Both the Dublin Descriptors and the subsequent Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area[6] as well as the European Qualification Framework for Life-long-learning[7] are structured in terms of competences and learning outcomes.

Some international organisations have supported and funded projects such as DeSeCo[8] and Tuning,[9] among others, in order to improve the level of achievement of the objectives set in the Bologna Declaration.[10] The Tuning Project (intercultural university cooperation project) has bolstered one of the main initiatives to apply CBL in HEIs, which started in Europe and was later extended to Latin America,[11] Asia, and Africa. CBL is described by Villa and Poblete as:

> CBL consist in developing necessary generic or transversal (instrumental, interpersonal and systemic) competences and the specific competences pertaining to each profession. The aim is to endow students with scientific and technical knowledge, and enable them to apply such knowledge in diverse complex contexts. To this end, knowledge is integrated along with

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[5] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Implementation Report* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015).

[6] Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks, *A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area* (Copenhaguen: Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, 2005, http://ecahe.eu/w/images/7/76/A_Framework_for_Qualifications_for_the_European_Higher_Education_Area.pdf

[7] European Commission, *The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2008).

[8] OECD, *La Definición y Selección de Competencias clave (DESECO). Resumen ejecutivo,* 2005, http://comclave.educarex.es/pluginfile.php/130/mod_resource/content/3/DESECO.pdf.

[9] Julia González and Robert Wagenaar, *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. Final Report – Phase 1*(Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 2003.

[10] "Bologna Declaration," 1999, http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/Ministerial_conferences/02/8/1999_Bologna_Declaration_English_553028.pdf.

[11] Pablo Beneitone, César Esquetini, Julia González, Maira Maletá, Gabriela Siufi, and Robert Wagenaar, eds., *Reflexiones y perspectivas de la educación superior en América latina. Informe Final – Proyecto Tuning – América Latina, 2004/2007* (Bilbao and Groningen: University of Deusto, 2008).

> attitudes and values in ways that are appropriate for each student´s personal and professional life. [12]

The relevant EU and national bodies, education authorities and quality assurance agencies have put in place frameworks and procedures in order to implement and promote these guidelines. The ENQA[13,14] has developed two versions of 'Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)'. The first version[15] included three of the seven standards which refer to the issue at stake. Standards 1 and 2 concern the need that institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality of their awards. Standard 3 establishes that students should be evaluated according to standards, regulations and procedures that are public and coherent, ensuring they are designed to measure learning outcomes; fit for purpose; and based on explicit and published criteria. The revised version of this framework[16] contains three (out of ten) standards that are focused on this matter: design and approval of programmes (standard 2); monitoring and review of programmes (standard 9); and ensuring programmes promote student-centred learning, teaching and assessment (standard 3).

At a national level, education ministries and quality assurance agencies have developed regulations and programmes that have set out procedures and standards for the design, approval, monitoring and assessment of their qualifications. Higher Education regulations in Spain[17] have established a number of learning goals formulated in terms of competences that are the backbone of their qualifications. Both the guidelines for the design and

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[12] Aurelio Villa and Manuel Poblete, *Competence-based learning. A proposal for the assessment of generic competences* (Bilbao: University of Deusto, 2009), 33.

[13] ENQA, *Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area* (Helsinki: ENQA, 2005), http://www.enqa.net/bologna.lasso. ESTE ENLACE NO FUNCIONA.

[14] ENQA, *Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area* (Brussels, Belgium, 2015), http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/.

[15] ENQA, *Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area* (Helsinki: ENQA, 2005), http://www.enqa.net/bologna.lasso.

[16] ENQA, *Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area* (Brussels, Belgium, 2015), http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/.

[17] MEC, *Real Decreto 1393/2007, de 29 de octubre, por el que se establece la ordenación de las enseñanzas universitarias oficiales,* 2007, https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2007/10/30/pdfs.

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approval of qualifications,[18,19] and for the monitoring and accreditation reviews[20] provide criteria as to how those competences should be formulated and aligned with teaching and assessment methodologies.

While there is extensive literature on CBL, no single model exists to investigate to what extent it has been implemented in a given university, institution or qualification. Several authors have noted the need to have standards and tools to this effect, to help institutions and their managers to face the process, beyond the important role played by lecturers and students.[21,22,23,24] A series of studies have proposed *models related to competence-based curriculum design*,[25,26,27,28] whereas others have put forward *strategic*

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[18] ANECA, "Guía de Apoyo para la redacción, puesta en práctica y evaluación de los Resultados del Aprendizaje," 2015, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12155/136031/file/verifica_gm_guia_V05.pdf.

[19] REACU, *Protocolo de evaluación para la verificación de títulos universitarios oficiales,* 2011, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12387/153627/file/verifica_protocolo_gradomaster_110207.pdf.

[20] ANECA, "Documento Marco: Evaluación para la renovación de la acreditación de títulos oficiales de Grado, Máster y Doctorado," 2016, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12737/157930/file/acredita_documentomarco_v4b.pdf.

[21] Peter Harris, Linda Snell, Martin Talbot, Ronald Harden, and international CBME collaborators, "Competency-based medical education: implications for undergraduate programs," *Medical Teacher 32*, no 8 (2010): 646-650.

[22] Vasanti Lagali-Jirge, "Need for paradigm shift in Indian dental education: A case for change toward competency-based education," *Journal of Indian Academy of Oral Medicine and Radiology* 27, no 2) (2015): 230-236.

[23] Daniela Drago, Sandra Shire, and Ozgur Ekmekci, "Improving Regulatory Education: Can We Reconcile Employers' Expectations With Academic Offerings?," T*herapeutic Innovation & Regulatory Science* 50, no 3 (2016): 330-336.

[24] Larry Gruppen, John Burkhardt, James Fitzgerald, Martha Funnell, Hilary Haftel, Monica Lypson, and John Vasquez, "Competency based education: programme design and challenges to implementation," *Medical education* 50, no. 5 (2016): 532-539.

[25] Rodolfo Schmal and Andrés Ruiz-Tagle, "Una metodología para el diseño de un currículo orientado a las competencias. Ingeniare," *Revista chilena de ingenierí* 16, no. 1 (2008): 147-158.

[26] Rodolfo Schmal and Andrés Ruiz-Tagle, "Una metodología para el diseño de un currículo orientado a las competencias," *Revista electrónica de desarrollo de competencias* 2, no. 4 (2009): 1-21.

[27] Martin Durán-García and Emilse Durán-AponteEmpresa, "Universidad y competencias. Propuesta de un modelo sistémico," *Revista Gestión Universitaria* 3, no. 3 (2011).

[28] Gabriel Icarte and Hugo Lávate, "Metodología para la Revisión y Actualización de un Diseño Curricular de una Carrera Universitaria Incorporando Conceptos de Aprendizaje Basado en Competencias," *Formación Universitaria* 9, no. 2 (2016): 3-16.

educational management models.[29,30] But none of them have developed a *comprehensive model with criteria and indicators to analyse the degree of implementation of CBL in a given HEI or qualification*.[31]

Two decades after this process began, it is time to take stock of its impact and analyse to what extent CBL has been implemented in HEIs. This process should take into account the most significant factors highlighted in the literature, which the promoting bodies and the stakeholders have attempted to adapt and transform over time.

2. **Objectives**

This paper seeks to answer the following research question: what are the key dimensions in the implementation of CBL in a HEI, and how can these dimensions be reflected in terms of criteria and indicators?

The aim is to provide a model to assess the extent to which CBL has been implemented, and to provide elements to identify the focus areas needed to further its development, by disaggregating them into dimensions, criteria and indicators. This model not only takes into account institutional aspects, but also those related to the legal and administrative context involved.

3. **Methodology**

This study uses qualitative methodology and is based on a systematic documentary review. It is exploratory in scope, since it is aimed at examining a little-researched area.[32] The first step was to carry out a literature review of existing models for the evaluation of CBL, using the meta-search engine Océano, a tool for searching bibliographic data that includes more than one hundred impact databases, both national and international, where scientific

[29] Rodolfo Schmal and Andrés Ruiz-Tagle, "Un modelo para la gestión de una escuela universitaria orientada a la formación basada en competencias," *Cuadernos de Administración* 22, no. 39 (2009): 287-305.

[30] Analia Giménez, "El papel de la gestión de centros educativos en un modelo de aprendizaje basado en competencias," *Páginas de Educación* 9, no. 1 (2016): 5-15.

[31] Amie Dragoo and Richard Barrows, "Implementing Competency-Based Education: Challenges, Strategies, and a Decision-Making Framework," *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education* 64, no. 2 (2016): 73-83.

[32] Robert Hernández, Carlos Fernández, and Pilar Baptista, *Metodología de la investigación* (México: McGraw Hill, 2014).

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papers, books, official documents, PhD theses and work submitted to conferences were consulted. The search descriptors were first constrained to 'competence-based learning', which yielded 395 results (out of which 67 referred to Higher Education), and to its Spanish equivalent ('aprendizaje basado en competencias'), which yielded 77 results (out of which 13 referred to Higher Education). Since the term 'competence' is often known as 'skill' in the Anglo-Saxon world and is related to generic or transversal competences, an open search was also conducted. The search phrase was 'model key transversal soft generic skills in higher education', and the search yielded 219 results, 67 of them from peer-reviewed journals. These two searches returned 38 results, which to some extent were related to learning/assessment competence-based 'models', but not necessarily to the evaluation of how CBL had been implemented. The models employed to analyse CBL included the proposals made by Cardoso, Tavares and Sin;[33] Acebedo-Afanador, Aznar-Díaz, and Hinojo-Lucena;[34] Poblete, Bezanilla, Fernández-Nogueira and Campos;[35] Villa, Campo, Villa, García-Olalla and Arranz;[36] Icarte and Lávate;[37] Villa,

[33] Sonia Cardoso, Orlanda Tavares, and Cristina Sin, "The quality of teaching staff: higher education institutions' compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance—the case of Portugal," *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability* 27, no. 3 (2015): 205-222.

[34] Manuel José Acebedo-Afanador, Inmaculada Aznar-Díaz, and Francisco Javier Hinojo-Lucena, "Instrumentos para la evaluación del aprendizaje basado en competencias: Estudio de caso," *Información Tecnológica* 28, no. 3 (2017): 107-118.

[35] Manuel Poblete, María José Bezanilla, Donna Fernández, and Lucía Campo, "Formación del docente en competencias genéricas: un instrumento para su planificación y desarrollo," *Educar* 52, 1 (2016): 71-91.

[36] Aurelio Villa, Lucía Campo, Olga Villa, Ana García-Olalla, and Sonia Arranz, "Valoración del profesorado de magisterio sobre el aprendizaje basado en competencias implantado," *Profesorado. Revista de curriculum y formación del profesorado* 17, no. 3 (2013): 35-55.

[37] Gabriel Icarte and Hugo Lávate, "Metodología para la Revisión y Actualización de un Diseño Curricular de una Carrera Universitaria Incorporando Conceptos de Aprendizaje Basado en Competencias," *Formación Universitaria* 9, no. 2 (2016): 3-16.

Arranz, Campo and Villa;[38] Ku Mota and Tejada;[39] Rueda;[40] García;[41] and García.[42] However, most of them presented either partial or broad models, and did not provide detailed indicators or descriptors. It calls attention that the majority of these models are published in Spanish language, since perhaps it is in Spanish speaking countries where CBL has had more incidence and impact.

Based on the literature reviewed, of both the ten systematic models encountered and of the partial contributions made by other authors, a model for the evaluation of CBL implementation was designed. This model was later submitted to the assessment of eight experts,[43] to ensure its reliability, validity, pertinence and usefulness.[44] The experts assessed the degree of consistency, clarity and relevance, and also noted whether it was necessary to add, delete and/or reformulate some items,[45] namely aspects, criteria and/or indicators subject to evaluation. The demand for quality followed ensured the existence of a unanimous positive evaluation by the 8 experts, for the inclusion of the criteria and indicators in the model. The initial design of the model had 28 criteria and 132 indicators. After a review process carried out during the course of 9 meetings among experts over an entire academic year, the model was finally structured into 18 criteria and 96 indicators.

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[38] Aurelio Villa, Sonia Arranz, Lucía Campo, and Olga Villa, "Percepción del profesorado y responsables académicos sobre el proceso de implantación del Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior en diversas titulaciones de educación," *Profesorado. Revista de curriculum y formación del profesorado* 19, no. 2 (2015): 245-264.

[39] María Magdalena Ku Mota and José Tejada, D*iagnóstico de necesidades basadas en competencia del profesorado de los institutos Tecnológicos de Quintana Roo, México* (Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma De Barcelona, Departament De Pedagogia Aplicada, 2013).

[40] Mario Rueda, "La evaluación del desempeño docente: consideraciones desde el enfoque por competencias," *Revista Electrónica de Investigación Educativa* 11, no. 2 (2009): 1-16.

[41] María Pilar García, "Estatus actual del profesorado en la educación superior: revisión de conceptos y modelos competenciales," *Tonos Digital* 30 (2016): 1-21.

[42] María José García, *Evaluar la integración de las competencias en la universidad* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2013).

[43] University lecturers and professors from Spain and Latin America with a track record as researchers and managers, including the monitoring and evaluation of qualifications, the development of generic competences, teaching evaluation and quality assurance, and Tuning project members.

[44] Thomas Knapp and Ralph Mueller, "Reliability and validity of instruments," in *The reviewer guide to quantitative methods in the social science,* ed. Gregory Hancock and Ralph Mueller (New York: Routledge, 2010), 337-341.

[45] Rafael Bisquerra, *Metodología de la investigación educativa* (Madrid: La Muralla, 2009).

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4. **The Model**

The model has seven dimensions, which explore the degree of implementation of CBL in HEIs (see Figure 1). The CIPP model was deemed the most appropriate to use, as it is a model for the evaluation of an institution.[46,47] We used an approach similar to this model which aims at evaluating a programme at HEI level in order to support decision-making for improvement. It is focused on the evaluation of dimensions and indicators referred to context (C), inputs (I), process (P), and products (P). The model proposed here provides two dimensions that review the contextual aspects of CBL implementation. This includes a national regulatory framework, and a more restrictive HEI regulatory framework. Three dimensions describe the implementation process within the institution, with regard to the design of degree qualifications, the subject/module planning process and teaching/learning practices. It also proposes using two dimensions that analyse the outcomes obtained and review the degree and subject/module programme planning.

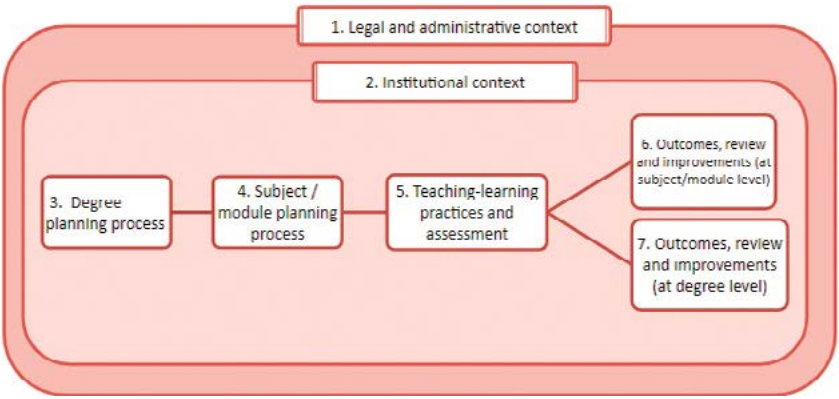

Figure 1.
Dimensions of a CBL model

[46] Daniel Stufflebeam, "The CIPP Model for program evaluation," in *Evaluation models*, ed. George Madaur, M. Scriven and Daniel Stufflebeam (Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff, 1983).

[47] Daniel Stufflebeam and Anthony Shinkfield, *Evaluation theory, models and applications* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007).

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The criteria and indicators are the means for determining what and how to evaluate, by establishing the positive, desirable qualities and characteristics within the dimensions under review. However, they have a different degree of specificity. Criterion here means a pre-established requirement or quality standard used to evaluate a system, a programme or an object of assessment. A criterion usually describes an overall, more or less observable situation, and therefore requires other means to make it more concrete, namely indicators. Indicators are instruments that provide relevant information about a significant aspect of an educational or institutional situation, that is, systematically collected quantitative or qualitative empirical pieces of data used to make an assessment. They are then used as the basis for improvements. The degree of compliance with the various indicators for each dimension should be evaluated according to the evidence obtained through different techniques and activities.

4.1. *Dimension 1: legal and administrative context*

Every country and region has a legislative context within which university activities must operate. On some occasions, the legal framework has encouraged innovation and a change of paradigm from instruction to learning, whereas in some countries very open provisions have been established that have allowed HEIs plenty of room for manoeuvre. Countries that have passed laws and regulations to guide this change and set out appropriate requirements have predictably seen more noticeable steps being taken, such as EU countries after the Bologna Declaration.[48] The applicable Higher Education laws in several Latin American countries (Chile, Mexico, Argentina, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Venezuela and Peru) and Spain[49] have been reviewed to determine which of their guidelines are related to the object of study in this paper. Four types of guidelines were identified, which have been reformulated in terms of criteria.

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[48] Bologna Declaration, 1999, http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/Ministerial_conferences/02/8/1999_Bologna_Declaration_English_553028.pdf.

[49] General Education Law (Chile) 20370 (2009); Education Law in the State of Nuevo León. Latest Reform (2014); Organic Law on Higher Education (Ecuador) (2010); General Education Law (Colombia) 18437 (2009); General Education Law (Peru) 28044 (2003); General Education Law (Mexico) (1993; latest reform 2017); National Education Law (Argentina) 26206 (2006); Organic Law on Education (Venezuela) (2009); Law 139-01 on Higher Education, Science and Technology (Dominican Republic) (2001); Organic Law 6/2001, of 21 December, on Universities (Spain); Royal Decree 1393/2007, of 29 October, which governs official university education (ANECA 2013; 2015a, 2016; REACU, 2011).

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The first criterion was the existence of legislation that promotes a process of innovation in Higher Education and incorporates CBL. Explicit promotion of competence-based education was rare (only in Spain), whereas provisions on a student-centred approach were found in the laws of some countries (Mexico, Spain), and university autonomy was recognised across the board (Ecuador, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Chile, Spain). A Higher Education system structured into stages in terms of Undergraduate Degree, Master's Degree, and Doctorate was generally recognised as well (Ecuador, Chile, Mexico, Colombia, Spain). References to the need for teaching staff to work on a collegial basis were rarely found.

The second criterion was that laws provide guidance on how to design a competence-based degree qualification. Having reviewed the references made to this kind of degree organisation in the different legal systems mentioned above, the main aspects identified were: the formulation of objectives as competences (Spain); an explicit difference made between (specific) competences sought in the various degrees, and (generic or transversal) competences, which were more personal in nature; a change in the methodology, marked by student-centred teaching-learning processes (Mexico, Spain); and student work time being taken into account (Mexico, Colombia, Spain, Venezuela); whereas learning assessment based on the defined competences was found to be less frequent (only in Spain).

The third criterion referred to the procedures put in place by HEIs to internally monitor degrees (Spain); and to external mechanisms to obtain official accreditation from education authorities or delegated agencies which include references to CBL (Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Spain).

The fourth criterion to verify the level of commitment to CBL in a given country was governmental support, as evidenced by specific funding, resources and other incentives for training and/or innovation projects and teaching improvement for CBL (Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Chile, and Spain). See table 1.

4.2. *Dimension 2: institutional context*

This process involves changes in how universities are structured. One of the first steps should be adapting their mission, vision and strategic plan to incorporate CBL,[50] and to make them consistent with the university's

[50] Aurelio Villa and Manuel Poblete, *Competence-based learning. A proposal for the assessment of generic competences* (Bilbao: University of Deusto, 2009).

educational policy. A university-specific learning model[51] is also needed to provide students with a sense of identity.[52] Some universities have defined identity-based competences, to be acquired by all students in the performance of any profession and in their life.[53,54] According to the recommendations made by ANECA,[55] these documents should be readily accessible on university websites to ensure transparency and allow stakeholders to make decisions.

These changes have been possible thanks to: the commitment made by the universities' management teams, including the Chancellor and Vice-chancellor's offices;[56] the creation of advisory and training units that support individual and institutional demands;[57,58] the introduction of pedagogical coordinators for each degree, year or area of knowledge;[59] and the support provided by administrative services.[60]

In Spain, the guidelines for the design of degree qualifications[61] establish that the curriculum should include the generic and specific competences to be

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[51] Manuel Poblete, "Evaluación de competencias en la Educación Superior: dificultades y condiciones," *IV Jornadas Universitarias de Innovación y Calidad* Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 2008.

[52] MEC, *Propuesta para la Renovación de las metodologías educativas en la universidad* (Madrid: MEC, Secretaría de Estado de Universidades, 2006), https://sede.educacion.gob.es/publiventa/descarga.action?f_codigo_agc=12114_19.

[53] Alejandro Sepúlveda, Margaly Andrea Quintana, Margarita Opazo, Rodolfo Lemarie, and Daniel Sáez, "Nivel de promoción de competencias genéricas-sello institucionales en Educación Básica, parvularia y diferencial: percepción de los estudiantes," *Revista de Orientación Educacional* 27, no. 52 (2013): 75-87.

[54] Julia González and Robert Wagenaar, *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. Final Report – Phase 1* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 2003.

[55] ANECA, "Documento Marco: Evaluación para la renovación de la acreditación de títulos oficiales de Grado, Máster y Doctorado," 2016, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12737/157930/file/acredita_documentomarco_v4b.pdf

[56] Aurelio Villa and Manuel Poblete, *Competence-based learning. A proposal for the assessment of generic competences* (Bilbao: University of Deusto, 2009).

[57] MEC, *Propuesta para la Renovación de las metodologías educativas en la universidad* (Madrid: MEC, Secretaría de Estado de Universidades, 2006), https://sede.educacion.gob.es/publiventa/descarga.action?f_codigo_agc=12114_19.

[58] Antonio Calvo-Bernardino and Ana Cristina Mingorance-Arnáiz, "La estrategia de las universidades frente al Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior," *Revista Complutense de Educación* 20, no. 2 (2009): 319-342.

[59] Antonio Calvo-Bernardino and Ana Cristina Mingorance-Arnáiz, "La estrategia de las universidades frente al Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior," *Revista Complutense de Educación* 20, no. 2 (2009): 319-342.

[60] Aurelio Villa and Manuel Poblete, *Competence-based learning. A proposal for the assessment of generic competences* (Bilbao: University of Deusto, 2009).

[61] ANECA, "Guía de Apoyo para la elaboración de la Memoria de verificación de Títulos Oficiales Universitarios," 2015, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12155/136031/file/

acquired by students to successfully complete their degree. They also provide that faculty members must prepare teaching guides with a module plan focused on the acquisition of those competences.[62] Evidence has been found that there is a need for institutions to incorporate mechanisms to design, approve, monitor and review their qualifications and teaching guides.

The criteria set out by ENQA[63,64] require that the teaching staff must be appropriately qualified and must have the opportunity to acquire their own competences as necessary, as part of the internal quality assurance system for which each institution is responsible. The programmes developed by ANECA[65] include the assessment and accreditation of the faculty. This agency is in charge of evaluating the qualifications needed to hold teaching positions or be part of the teaching staff; whereas universities should have criteria for their internal selection process, take responsibility for assessing their personnel, identify any training needs, design actions to correct the deficiencies detected,[66] and provide some tools and resources to help implement initiatives for teaching innovation and improvement. See table 2.

4.3. *Dimension 3: Degree programme planning process*

It has been a regular practice in Higher Education planning processes to consider the curriculum to be the sum of the individual modules (or similar units) that constitute it, and therefore to have each individual module organised separately. Since competences are ambitious, integrative learning objectives to

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[62] Antonio Calvo-Bernardino and Ana Cristina Mingorance-Arnáiz, "La estrategia de las universidades frente al Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior," *Revista Complutense de Educación* 20, no. 2 (2009): 319-342.

[63] ENQA, *Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area* (Helsinki: ENQA, 2005), http://www.enqa.net/bologna.lasso.

[64] ENQA, *Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area* (Brussels, Belgium, 2015), http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/.

[65] ANECA, "Programa DOCENTIA (Programa de apoyo para la evaluación de la actividad docente del profesorado universitario). Integración y actualización de la documentación del Programa," 2015.v1, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/13305/164819/file/DOCENTIA_nuevadoc_v1_final.pdf.

[66] Susana Aranega, *De la detección de las necesidades de formación pedagógica a la elaboración de un plan de formación en la sociedad* (Barcelona: Octaedro, 2013).

be achieved,[67,68,69] it became apparent that implementing CBL would not be feasible on an individual module basis. It was seen that it would be necessary to engage in collegial efforts to organise how the competences are progressively acquired throughout the whole curriculum.[70,71,72] This new collegial approach, which can be brought about through different structures and/or roles, has come to be essential.

The first requirement for designing a competence-based degree programme is the existence of an integrated educational project. The professionalisation of the Higher Education curriculum and the growing demand for socially responsible professional performance[73,74] has emphasised the need to analyse the environment, in order to ensure the pertinence and focus the direction of degree programmes,[75,76] and to define a professional profile to work towards.[77]

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[67] Bologna Declaration, 1999, http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/Ministerial_conferences/02/8/1999_Bologna_Declaration_English_553028.pdf.

[68] Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks, *A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area* (Copenhaguen: Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, 2005), http://ecahe.eu/w/images/7/76/A_Framework_for_Qualifications_for_the_European_Higher_Education_Area.pdf.

[69] European Comission, *The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2008).

[70] Mario de Miguel et al., *Adaptación de los planes de estudio al proceso de Convergencia europea* (Madrid: Dirección General de Universidades, MEC – Programa de Estudios y Análisis para la mejora de la calidad de la enseñanza y de la actividad del profesorado universitario, 2004).

[71] Rosa María Rodríguez, "Mejora continua de la práctica docente universitaria: una experiencia desde el proceso de convergencia del EEES," *Revista Electrónica Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado* 10, no. 1 (2007): 1-8.

[72] Francisco Javier Tejedor and Ana García-Valcárcel, "Causas del bajo rendimiento del estudiante universitario (en opinión de los profesores y alumnos). Propuesta de mejora en el marco del EEES," *Revista de Educación* 342 (2007): 443- 472.

[73] Jacques Delors, coord., *La educación encierra un tesoro. Informe a la UNESCO de la Comisión Internacional sobre la educación para el siglo XXI* (París: UNESCO – Santillana, 1998).

[74] José Bricall, *Universidad 2000* (Madrid: CRUE, 2000).

[75] Julia González and Robert Wagenaar, eds., *Tuning educational Structures in Europe. Universities contribution to the Bologna Process. Final Report. Pilot Project – Phase 2* (Bilbao: University of Deusto and University of Groningen, 2006).

[76] ANECA, "Guía de Apoyo para la elaboración de la Memoria de verificación de Títulos Oficiales Universitarios," 2015, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12155/136031/file/verifica_gm_guia_V05.pdf.

[77] Mario de Miguel et al., *Adaptación de los planes de estudio al proceso de Convergencia europea* (Madrid: Dirección General de Universidades, MEC – Programa de Estudios y Análisis para la mejora de la calidad de la enseñanza y de la actividad del profesorado universitario, 2004).

This profile is the reference point for identifying the competences that a given professional should possess in order to perform their role.[78,79,80,81,82]

The reference to performance in authentic situations and contexts requires using active, student-centred methodologies.[83,84,85,86] These may be designed within each subject or in the form of broader units (projects, modules or areas).[87,88,89] The curriculum should therefore contain decisions with respect to the learning model and/or methods to be used, and the type of academic units to be employed to organise the programme,[90,91] including the work time

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[78] Julia González and Robert Wagenaar, *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. Final Report – Phase 1* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 2003).

[79] Julia González and Robert Wagenaar, eds., *Tuning educational Structures in Europe. Universities contribution to the Bologna Process. Final Report. Pilot Project – Phase 2* (Bilbao: University of Deusto and University of Groningen, 2006).

[80] Universidad de Deusto, *Pautas para la elaboración del Perfil Académico – Profesional de la Titulación* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 2003).

[81] Universidad de Deusto, *Orientaciones para la formulación y el desarrollo de competencias específicas* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 2007).

[82] ANECA, "Guía de Apoyo para la elaboración de la Memoria de verificación de Títulos Oficiales Universitarios," 2015, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12155/136031/file/verifica_gm_guia_V05.pdf.

[83] Universidad de Deusto, *Marco Pedagógico de la Universidad de Deusto* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 2001).

[84] MEC, *Propuesta para la Renovación de las metodologías educativas en la universidad* (Madrid: MEC, Secretaría de Estado de Universidades, 2006), https://sede.educacion.gob.es/publiventa/descarga.action?f_codigo_agc=12114_19.

[85] Mario de Miguel, coord., *Metodologías de enseñanza y aprendizaje para el desarrollo de competencias: orientaciones para el profesorado universitario ante el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior* (Madrid: Alianza, 2006).

[86] John Biggs, *Calidad del aprendizaje universitario* (Madrid: Narcea, 2006).

[87] Mario de Miguel et al., *Adaptación de los planes de estudio al proceso de Convergencia europea* (Madrid: Dirección General de Universidades, MEC – Programa de Estudios y Análisis para la mejora de la calidad de la enseñanza y de la actividad del profesorado universitario, 2004).

[88] Mario de Miguel, coord., *Metodologías de enseñanza y aprendizaje para el desarrollo de competencias: orientaciones para el profesorado universitario ante el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior* (Madrid: Alianza, 2006).

[89] ANECA, "Guía de Apoyo para la elaboración de la Memoria de verificación de Títulos Oficiales Universitarios," 2015, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12155/136031/file/verifica_gm_guia_V05.pdf.

[90] Mario de Miguel et al., *Adaptación de los planes de estudio al proceso de Convergencia europea* (Madrid: Dirección General de Universidades, MEC – Programa de Estudios y Análisis para la mejora de la calidad de la enseñanza y de la actividad del profesorado universitario, 2004).

[91] ANECA, "Guía de Apoyo para la elaboración de la Memoria de verificación de Títulos Oficiales Universitarios," 2015, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12155/136031/file/

assigned to them.[92,93,94] The competences within the degree are to be detailed further at a later stage, using tools such as competence maps or curriculum grids to define how they will be acquired in the different units.[95] Assessment structure also needs to be consistent with the methodological choices made, to determine the degree of acquisition of those competences, both upon completion of each unit and of the degree. This will establish the extent to which the outcomes in the graduate profile have been achieved.[96,97,98,99,100]

Some mechanisms also need to be introduced to monitor whether the plan is implemented in a coordinated manner, which include distributing the competences and content to be developed[101 102]; specifying learning scenarios and activities and making spaces available for them; obtaining the necessary

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[92] European Comission, *ECTS Users' Guide. European Credit Transfer and accumulation system and the diploma supplement (*Brussels: Education and Culture DG, 2005).

[93] MEC, *Real Decreto 1393/2007, de 29 de octubre, por el que se establece la ordenación de las enseñanzas universitarias oficiales,* 2007, https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2007/10/30/pdfs.

[94] ANECA, "Guía de Apoyo para la elaboración de la Memoria de verificación de Títulos Oficiales Universitarios," 2015, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12155/136031/file/verifica_gm_guia_V05.pdf.

[95] Universidad de Deusto, *Orientaciones para la formulación y el desarrollo de competencias específicas* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 2007).

[96] Gonzalez, Julia y Wagenaar, Robert, eds., *Tuning educational Structures in Europe. Informe final. Proyecto piloto –Fase II. La contribución de las universidades al proceso de Bolonia* (Bilbao: University of Deusto and University of Groningen).

[97] Aurelio Villa and Manuel Poblete, *Competence-based learning. A proposal for the assessment of generic competences* (Bilbao: University of Deusto, 2009).

[98] European Comission, *Using Learning Outcomes* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2011).

[99] ANECA, "Guía de Apoyo para la redacción, puesta en práctica y evaluación de los Resultados del Aprendizaje," 2013, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12765/158329/file/learningoutcomes_v02.pdf.

[100] ANECA, "Guía de Apoyo para la elaboración de la Memoria de verificación de Títulos Oficiales Universitarios," 2015, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12155/136031/file/verifica_gm_guia_V05.pdf.

[101] ANECA, "Guía de Apoyo para la elaboración de la Memoria de verificación de Títulos Oficiales Universitarios," 2015, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12155/136031/file/verifica_gm_guia_V05.pdf.

[102] ANECA, "Documento Marco: Evaluación para la renovación de la acreditación de títulos oficiales de Grado, Máster y Doctorado," 2016, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12737/157930/file/acredita_documentomarco_v4b.pdf.

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resources; organising work time;[103] [104] enabling transversal procedures for assessment;[105,106] scheduling meetings and arranging meeting places; using appropriate documents, repositories and digital applications, among others.[107,108,109,110] See table 3.

4.4. *Dimension 4: module/subject planning process*

One of the challenges faced by the teaching staff who put CBL into practice is the appropriate planning of their module or subject, taking the following key elements into consideration:[111,112] the contribution to the graduate

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[103] Julia González and Robert Wagenaar, *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. Final Report – Phase 1* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 2003).

[104] Julia González and Robert Wagenaar, eds., *Tuning educational Structures in Europe. Universities contribution to the Bologna Process. Final Report. Pilot Project – Phase 2* (Bilbao: University of Deusto and University of Groningen, 2006*)*.

[105] ANECA, "Guía de Apoyo para la redacción, puesta en práctica y evaluación de los Resultados del Aprendizaje," 2013, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12765/158329/file/learningoutcomes_v02.pdf.

[106] ANECA, "Documento Marco: Evaluación para la renovación de la acreditación de títulos oficiales de Grado, Máster y Doctorado," 2016, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12737/157930/file/acredita_documentomarco_v4b.pdf.

[107] Mario de Miguel et al., *Adaptación de los planes de estudio al proceso de Convergencia europea* (Madrid: Dirección General de Universidades, MEC – Programa de Estudios y Análisis para la mejora de la calidad de la enseñanza y de la actividad del profesorado universitario, 2004).

[108] Aurelio Villa and Ana García-Olalla, "Un sistema de garantía de calidad de la docencia: un estudio de caso," *Revista Electrónica Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado* 17, no. 3 (2014): 65-78.

[109] Ana García-Olalla, "El Portafolio Docente: Un instrumento para evaluación y mejora de la práctica docente," *Revista CIDUI* 2 (2014b): 1-13.

[110] Manuel Poblete and Ana García-Olalla, *Desarrollo de competencias y créditos transferibles. Experiencia multidisciplinar en el contexto universitario* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2007).

[111] Universidad de Deusto, *Normas y Orientaciones para la Elaboración de Programas y Guías de Aprendizaje* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 2007).

[112] Ana García-Olalla and Elena Auzmendi, "Evaluación de la Planificación de la docencia en las asignaturas de Grado," in *Libro de Actas CIDUI La Universidad una institución de la sociedad,* 2012, http://www.cidui.org/revista-cidui12.

profile and the acquisition of competences by students;[113,114] the use of teaching-learning strategies;[115] and the suitable assessment of the competences.[116,117,118,119,120]

Each degree qualification is intended to enable students to achieve a certain academic and professional profile. Therefore, the starting point in the planning process needs to be developing that profile and the prerequisites to be met by students. Each faculty member should define which specific and generic competences are sought within their particular module (or similar unit).[121,122]

The second key criterion is to specify which teaching-learning strategies will be used. The lecturer should: provide a pedagogical strategy that is coherent with the competences to be acquired by students, and consistent with the principles of autonomy and meaningful learning; plan the learning activities in detail, including the time needed to carry them out; provide all documents and supporting resources required for those activities; and establish the

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[113] Pablo Beneitone, Julia González, and Robert Wagenaar, *Meta-perfiles y perfiles. Una nueva aproximación a para las titulaciones en América Latina* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 2014), http://www.tuningal.org/es/publicaciones/doc_download/122-meta-perfiles-y-perfiles-una-nueva-aproximacion-para-las-titulaciones-en-america-latina-espanol.

[114] Gerardo Serpa, Adriana Falcón, and Elvia Isabel Echeverría, "Contribución de los meta-perfiles a mejorar la formación por competencias: el caso de la carrera de Enfermería en Uniandes," *Revista de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación* 3, no. 2 (2016) 1-16.

[115] Mario de Miguel, coord., *Metodologías de enseñanza y aprendizaje para el desarrollo de competencias: orientaciones para el profesorado universitario ante el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior* (Madrid: Alianza, 2006).

[116] Maria Lourdes Villardón, "Evaluación del aprendizaje para promover el desarrollo de competencias," *Educatio siglo XXI* 24 (2006): 57-76.

[117] Aurelio Villa and Manuel Poblete, *Competence-based learning. A proposal for the assessment of generic competences* (Bilbao: University of Deusto, 2009).

[118] María Paz Sanz and Laura Raquel Pedreño, "La planificación de evaluación de competencias en Educación Superior," *Revista electrónica interuniversitaria de formación del profesorado* 14, no. 1 (2011): 113-124.

[119] Raúl Fuentes and Lucía Amorós, "Evaluación de competencias: Un ejemplo en posgrado," *Revista Electrónica de Desarrollo de Competencias (REDEC)* 5, no. 1(2012): 1-22.

[120] Jesús Jornet, José González, Jesús Suárez, and María Jesús Perales, "Diseños de evaluación de competencias: consideraciones acerca de los estándares en el dominio de las competencias," *Bordón* 63, no. 1 (2011):125-145.

[121] Viviana Maura and Rosa Tirado, "Competencias genéricas y formación profesional: un análisis desde la docencia universitaria," *Revista iberoamericana de educación* 47 (2008): 185-209.

[122] Enric Rovira, "Competencias genéricas en la formación universitaria," *Revista de Educação* 325 (2001): 229-321.

procedures, schedules and places for monitoring, tutoring and directing the learning process.[123,124]

The third key criterion is to set forth a suitable system for the assessment of competences,[125,126] one of the most complicated aspects for teaching staff.[127] In order to put into competence-based assessment into practice, the lecturer needs to formulate the learning outcomes and/or indicators to be used for assessing and giving feedback to students with respect to their progress in acquiring the necessary competences;[128,129] select the techniques and instruments to be employed to collect the relevant information, during and at the end of the process; and design the marking scheme to be used (weighting of each competence/indicator towards the final mark), reflecting the degree of acquisition of the competences both throughout the process and upon completion of the module programme.[130,131,132] See table 4.

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[123] Mario de Miguel, coord., *Metodologías de enseñanza y aprendizaje para el desarrollo de competencias: orientaciones para el profesorado universitario ante el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior* (Madrid: Alianza, 2006).

[124] Ana García-Olalla and Elena Auzmendi, "Evaluación de la Planificación de la docencia en las asignaturas de Grado," in *Libro de Actas CIDUI La Universidad una institución de la sociedad,* 2012, http://www.cidui.org/revista-cidui12.

[125] Aurelio Villa and Manuel Poblete, "Evaluación de competencias genéricas: principios, oportunidades y limitaciones," *Bordón* 63, no. 1 (2011): 147-170.

[126] Elena Cano, "La evaluación por competencias en la educación superior," *Profesorado* 12, no. 3 (2011): 1-16.

[127] Juan Manuel Álvarez, "Evaluar el aprendizaje en una enseñanza centrada en competencias," in *Educar por competencias, ¿qué hay de nuevo?,* ed. José Gimeno (Madrid: Morata, 2008).

[128] Aurelio Villa y Manuel Poblete, "Evaluación de competencias genéricas: principios, oportunidades y limitaciones," *Bordón* 63, no. 1 (2011): 147-170.

[129] ANECA, "Guía de Apoyo para la redacción, puesta en práctica y evaluación de los Resultados del Aprendizaje," 2013, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12765/158329/file/learningoutcomes_v02.pdf.

[130] Universidad de Deusto, *Normas y Orientaciones para la Elaboración de Programas y Guías de Aprendizaje* (Bilbao: UD, 2007).

[131] G Ana García-Olalla and Elena Auzmendi, "Evaluación de la Planificación de la docencia en las asignaturas de Grado," in *Libro de Actas CIDUI La Universidad una institución de la sociedad,* 2012, http://www.cidui.org/revista-cidui12.

[132] Aurelio Villa and Manuel Poblete, "Evaluación de competencias genéricas: principios, oportunidades y limitaciones," *Bordón* 63, no. 1 (2011): 147-170.

4.5. *Dimension 5: Teaching practices and assessment*

After the planning process has been completed, the focus is shifted to teaching practices. How faculty members should behave towards students, the nature of their teaching practices and the lecturer-student relationship all mark a change from a lecturer- and content-based approach to a student-centred learning process that seeks to provide an overall education.[133]

The first criterion is the type of methodologies used and their pertinence to competence-based learning.[134,135,136,137] Active methodologies should be employed and their purpose should be conveyed to students, thus promoting their motivation and involvement, and fomenting autonomous and meaningful learning.[138,139,140,141,142] The use of a broad range of methodologies (PBL, cooperative learning, case studies, etc.) and/or techniques (simulations, debates, competitions, role-playing, etc.) is advised. This means that teaching practices can be adapted to different types of students, contents and

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[133] Águeda Benito and Ana Cruz, *Nuevas claves para la docencia universitaria en el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior: en el espacio europeo de educación superior* (Madrid: Narcea, 2005).

[134] Águeda Benito and Ana Cruz, *Nuevas claves para la docencia universitaria en el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior: en el espacio europeo de educación superior* (Madrid: Narcea, 2005).

[135] John Biggs, *Calidad del aprendizaje universitario* (Madrid: Narcea, 2006).

[136] María Fernández, "From the Teaching-Based Model to the Learning-Based Model: A Comparative Study," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 237 (2017): 678-684.

[137] Ana García-Olalla, "El Portafolio Docente: Un instrumento para evaluación y mejora de la práctica docente," *Revista CIDUI* 2 (2014): 1-13.

[138] Águeda Benito and Ana Cruz, *Nuevas claves para la docencia universitaria en el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior: en el espacio europeo de educación superior* (Madrid: Narcea, 2005).

[139] Francisco Javier Tejedor and Ana García-Valcárcel, "Causas del bajo rendimiento del estudiante universitario (en opinión de los profesores y alumnos). Propuesta de mejora en el marco del EEES," *Revista de Educación* 342 (2007): 443- 472.

[140] Rufino Cano, "Tutoría universitaria y aprendizaje por competencias ¿Cómo lograrlo?," *Revista electrónica interuniversitaria de formación del profesorado* 12, no. 1 (2009): 181-204.

[141] Rosa García, Sonsoles Guerra, Natalia González, and Emilio Álvarez, "Estudio exploratorio de las percepciones del profesorado universitario respecto a la gestión de la docencia," *Educación XXI*, 13, no. 2 (2010): 163-184.

[142] María Fernández, "From the Teaching-Based Model to the Learning-Based Model: A Comparative Study," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 237 (2017): 678-684.

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competences.[143,144,145] It is also recommendable to propose contextualised, real-life activities,[146,147,148] and to use ICT to support the process.[149,150] Any additional necessary conditions and resources, both human and material, should also be made available.[151,152]

The second criterion is related to the scope and importance of student guidance and tutoring. This task has come to play an essential role, as it gives direction to the learning process and helps ensure that it takes place in an autonomous and responsible manner. It is difficult to deliver a competence-based module (or similar unit) without the lecturer guiding and supporting

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[143] Águeda Benito and Ana Cruz, *Nuevas claves para la docencia universitaria en el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior: en el espacio europeo de educación superior (*Madrid: Narcea, 2005).

[144] Rosa María Rodríguez, "Mejora continua de la práctica docente universitaria: una experiencia desde el proceso de convergencia del EEES," *Revista Electrónica Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado* 10, no. 1 (2007): 1-8.

[145] María Fernández, "From the Teaching-Based Model to the Learning-Based Model: A Comparative Study," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 237 (2017): 678-684.

[146] Amparo Fernández, "Metodologías activas para la formación de competencias," *Educatio siglo XXI*, 24 (2006): 35-56.

[147] María Pallisera, Judit, Fullana, Anna Planas, and Arantza Del Valle, "La adaptación al espacio europeo de educación superior en España: los cambios/retos que implica la enseñanza basada en competencias y orientaciones para responder a ellos," *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación* 52, no. 4 (2010): 1-13.

[148] Frida Díaz and Ramses Barroso, "Diseño y validación de una propuesta de evaluación auténtica de competencias en un programa de formación de docentes de educación básica en México," *Perspectiva Educacional* 53, no. 1 (2014): 36-56.

[149] Jesús Salinas, "Innovación docente y uso de las TIC en la enseñanza universitaria," *RUSC, Universities and Knowledge Society Journal* 1, no. 1 (2004) 1-16.

[150] Carlos Ferro, Ana Isabel Martínez, and María del Carmen Otero, "Ventajas del uso de las TICs en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje desde la óptica de los docentes universitarios españoles," *EDUTEC, Revista Electrónica de Tecnología Educativa* 29 (2009):1-12.

[151] Rufino Cano, "Modelo organizativo para la planificación y desarrollo de la Tutoría Universitaria en el marco del proceso de convergencia europea en Educación Superior," *Revista Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado* 22, no. 1 (2008): 185-206.

[152] Rosa García, Sonsoles Guerra, Natalia González, and Emilio Álvarez, "Estudio exploratorio de las percepciones del profesorado universitario respecto a la gestión de la docencia," *Educación XXI*, 13, no. 2 (2010): 163-184.

students throughout the process.[153,154,155,156] Additionally, as noted by several authors,[157,158,159] tutoring should not only be focused on teaching-learning issues, linked to the monitoring of the learning process within a given module, but it should also have a guiding role, including providing support on personal issues and concerns regarding career direction and advice.

The third criterion is focused on how the subject or module would be assessed, which should be consistent with the competences sought in the programme.[160,161,162,163,164] This should cover progress both in terms of specific competences and of transversal or generic competences. The CALOHEE

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[153] Águeda Benito and Ana Cruz, *Nuevas claves para la docencia universitaria en el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior: en el espacio europeo de educación superior* (Madrid: Narcea, 2005).

[154] Rufino Cano, "Modelo organizativo para la planificación y desarrollo de la Tutoría Universitaria en el marco del proceso de convergencia europea en Educación Superior," *Revista Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado* 22, no. 1 (2008): 185-206.

[155] Eva María Torrecilla, María José Rodríguez, María Esperanza Herrera, and Juan Francisco Martín, "Evaluación de calidad de un proceso de tutoría de titulación universitaria: la perspectiva del estudiante de nuevo ingreso en educación," *REOP, Revista Española de Orientación y Psicopedagogía* 24, no. 2 (2013): 79-99.

[156] María Fernández, "From the Teaching-Based Model to the Learning-Based Model: A Comparative Study," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 237 (2017): 678-684.

[157] Francisco Javier Tejedor and Ana García-Valcárcel, "Causas del bajo rendimiento del estudiante universitario (en opinión de los profesores y alumnos). Propuesta de mejora en el marco del EEES," *Revista de Educación* 342 (2007): 443- 472.

[158] Rufino Cano, "Modelo organizativo para la planificación y desarrollo de la Tutoría Universitaria en el marco del proceso de convergencia europea en Educación Superior," *Revista Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado* 22, no. 1 (2008): 185-206.

[159] Eva María Torrecilla, María José Rodríguez, María Esperanza Herrera, and Juan Francisco Martín, "Evaluación de calidad de un proceso de tutoría de titulación universitaria: la perspectiva del estudiante de nuevo ingreso en educación," *REOP, Revista Española de Orientación y Psicopedagogía* 24, no. 2 (2013): 79-99.

[160] Águeda Benito and Ana Cruz, *Nuevas claves para la docencia universitaria en el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior: en el espacio europeo de educación superior (*Madrid: Narcea, 2005).

[161] Víctor López-Pastor, "El papel de la evaluación formativa en el proceso de convergencia hacia el EEES: Análisis del estado de la cuestión y presentación de un sistema de intervención," *Revista interuniversitaria de formación del profesorado* 20, no. 3 (2006): 93-119.

[162] Víctor López-Pastor, "El papel de la evaluación formativa en la evaluación por competencias: aportaciones de la red de evaluación formativa y compartida en docencia universitaria," *REDU, Revista de Docencia Universitaria* 9, no. 1 (2011): 159-173.

[163] Maria Lourdes Villardón, "Evaluación del aprendizaje para promover el desarrollo de competencias," *Educatio siglo XXI* 24 (2006): 57-76.

[164] Ana García-Olalla, "El Portafolio Docente: Un instrumento para evaluación y mejora de la práctica docente," *Revista CIDUI* 2 (2014): 1-13.

Project of the European Union offers a complete example of how to develop a competence based learning assessment of students based on 5 areas of knowledge: Engineering (Civil Engineering), Health Care (Nursing), Humanities (History), Natural Sciences (Physics) and Social Sciences (Education).[165] A correct assessment involves the use of a multitude of tools and techniques[166]. It also entails transparency in managing the process: students should be informed in advance of the instruments, criteria, indicators and weighting that will be used in the assessment of a given module,[167,168] and of the assessment schedule.[169]

Assessment should not be merely summative but formative in nature, with feedback to be regarded as a key element for a student's progress. Obtaining feedback on how to learn, on the difficulties and obstacles to be overcome, and on the errors to be corrected is at the core of improvement. This results in deriving optimal benefits from the module.[170,171] It is also advisable to involve different agents in the assessment process, including the lecturer, their

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[165] CALOHEE, "Measuring and Comparing Achievements of Learning Outcomes in Higher Education in Europe," last modified 2019, https://www.calohee.eu/main-objectives/.

[166] Victor López-Pastor, "El papel de la evaluación formativa en la evaluación por competencias: aportaciones de la red de evaluación formativa y compartida en docencia universitaria," *REDU, Revista de Docencia Universitaria* 9, no. 1 (2011): 159-173.

[167] Águeda Benito and Ana Cruz, *Nuevas claves para la docencia universitaria en el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior: en el espacio europeo de educación superior* (Madrid: Narcea, 2005).

[168] Maria Lourdes Villardón, "Evaluación del aprendizaje para promover el desarrollo de competencias," *Educatio siglo XXI* 24 (2006): 57-76.

[169] Víctor López-Pastor, "El papel de la evaluación formativa en la evaluación por competencias: aportaciones de la red de evaluación formativa y compartida en docencia universitaria," *REDU, Revista de Docencia Universitaria* 9, no. 1 (2011): 159-173.

[170] Universidad de Deusto, *Marco Pedagógico de la Universidad de Deusto* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 2001).

[171] Ana García-Olalla, "El Portafolio Docente: Un instrumento para evaluación y mejora de la práctica docente," *Revista CIDUI* 2 (2014): 1-13.

colleagues, and students themselves,[172,173,174,175] and to rely on ICT to support the process.[176,177,178] See table 5.

4.6. *Dimension 6: Module review and improvement*

Several authors have included lecturers' reflections on their own practice in their competence-based teaching-learning models.[179,180,181,182,183,184,185] The

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[172] Águeda Benito and Ana Cruz, *Nuevas claves para la docencia universitaria en el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior: en el espacio europeo de educación superior* (Madrid: Narcea, 2005).

[173] Víctor López-Pastor, "El papel de la evaluación formativa en la evaluación por competencias: aportaciones de la red de evaluación formativa y compartida en docencia universitaria," *REDU, Revista de Docencia Universitaria* 9, no. 1 (2011): 159-173.

[174] Maria Lourdes Villardón, "Evaluación del aprendizaje para promover el desarrollo de competencias," *Educatio siglo XXI* 24 (2006): 57-76.

[175] María Teresa Padilla and Javier Gil, "La evaluación orientada al aprendizaje en la Educación Superior: condiciones y estrategias para su aplicación en la docencia universitaria," *Revista española de pedagogía* 241 (2008): 467-485.

[176] Jesús Salinas, "Innovación docente y uso de las TIC en la enseñanza universitaria," *RUSC, Universities and Knowledge Society Journal* 1, no. 1 (2004) 1-16.

[177] Águeda Benito and Ana Cruz, *Nuevas claves para la docencia universitaria en el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior: en el espacio europeo de educación superior (*Madrid: Narcea, 2005).

[178] Susana Olmos-Migueláñez and María José Rodríguez-Conde, "El profesorado universitario ante la e-evaluación del aprendizaje," *ESE. Estudios Sobre Educación. Revista semestral del Departamento de Educación de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Navarra* 20 (2011): 181-202.

[179] Miguel Ángel Zabalza, *Competencias docentes del profesorado universitario. Calidad y desarrollo profesional* (Madrid: Narcea, 2003).

[180] Miguel Valcarcel, coord., *La preparación del profesorado universitario para la convergencia europea en educación superior. Informe Investigación, Proyecto EA2003-0040*, 2005.

[181] Francisco Ayala, *El modelo de formación por competencias*, 2008, http://www.modelo.edu.mx/univ/mcom.ppt.

[182] José Tejada, "Competencias Docentes," *Profesorado. Revista de curriculum y formación del profesorado* 13, no. 2 (2009): 1-15.

[183] José María Marbán, coord., *Análisis de las herramientas de evaluación de la Calidad Docente mediante contrastes* basados *en Estándares Internacionales de Excelencia* (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, Proyecto EA2011-0113, 2012).

[184] Aurelio Villa and Ana García-Olalla, "Un sistema de garantía de calidad de la docencia: un estudio de caso," *Revista Electrónica Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado* 17, no. 3 (2014): 65-78.

[185] Ana García-Olalla, "Estándares para evaluar la calidad docente," in *La Innovación Educativa para transformar la sociedad multicultural: El papel de las Universidades*, ed. Aurelio Villa (Bogotá: FIIU, 2014).

process for the review and improvement of a given module should be part of the teaching process at different points,[186] but it is particularly important at the end of the academic year. It is at this time that the strengths and weaknesses should be identified, and changes and actions need to be proposed to improve the way in which students should acquire the relevant competences the following year.[187] Improvement may involve making minor, specific changes, including those to teaching plans, the use of teaching time, and the methods, techniques and/or activities for teaching-learning and assessment. These do not require excessive time and training on the part of the lecturer. In other cases, major changes may be required, which may demand the faculty member to participate in specific training. In the case of university lecturers and professors, training is important, since they generally begin their teaching career without any specific training in teaching methods.[188]

This reflection process should rely on information from different sources: students, colleagues, academic managers and lecturers themselves,[189,190,191] although it is mainly students' evaluations that are usually taken as a reference point. Moreira and Santos[192] noted that a lecturer's self-assessment provides a more substantive reflection on their performance than the analysis made by students. In this regard, Montoya[193] referred to the 'assessment of assessments'

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[186] Benilde García-Cabrero, Javier Loredo, and Guadalupe Carranza, "Análisis de la práctica educativa de los docentes: pensamiento, interacción y reflexión," *Revista Electrónica de Investigación Educativa* 10 (2008): 1-15.

[187] Ana García-Olalla, "El Portafolio Docente: Un instrumento para evaluación y mejora de la práctica docente," *Revista CIDUI* 2 (2014): 1-13.

[188] Leticia Elizalde, Leticia and Rafael Reyes, "Elementos clave para la evaluación del desempeño de los docentes," *Revista electrónica de investigación educativa* 10 (2008): 1-8.

[189] ANECA, "Programa DOCENTIA (Programa de apoyo para la evaluación de la actividad docente del profesorado universitario). Integración y actualización de la documentación del Programa," *2015. v1,* 2015, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/13305/164819/file/DOCENTIA_nuevadoc_v1_final.pdf.

[190] José María Marbán, coord., *Análisis de las herramientas de evaluación de la Calidad Docente mediante contrastes* basados *en Estándares Internacionales de Excelencia* (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, Proyecto EA2011-0113, 2012).

[191] Universidad de Deusto, *Manual para la Garantía Interna de Calidad Docente: Modelo de desarrollo profesional en la UD* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 2007).

[192] Luis Miguel Moreira and Miguel Angel Santos, "Evaluando la enseñanza en la educación superior: percepciones de docentes y discentes," *Revista Electrónica de investigación Educativa* 18, no. 3 (2016): 19-36.

[193] Juny Montoya, "Evaluar las evaluaciones: Diseño puesta a prueba de un sistema de evaluación para el mejoramiento de la docencia en unidades," *Revista iberoamericana de evaluación educativa* 5, no. 1 (2012): 48-58.

as a way of promoting reflection processes on teaching practices among faculty members.

The analysis of teaching practices at the end of the process includes analysing students' outcomes,[194] that is, the meanings students have managed to construct concerning the relevant competences, not only in terms of their opinion about the teaching practices involved, or their perception of the learning attained.[195] In so doing, the lecturer becomes involved beyond the typical role in assessment processes (an individual being evaluated through standardised instruments), and fosters full participation in the evaluation and the creation of new educational goals.

Teaching practices may be reflected on either by faculty members on an individual basis, or on a collegial basis (between the lecturer and their line manager, or between lecturers). Montoya[196] proposed an assessment system that includes an interview. The study found that most lecturers saw the interview as a useful opportunity to reflect on their teaching practice. Some of them also clearly identified ways of improving their courses, and their specific training needs. It is important to take into account that implementing policies and strategies for faculty members' professional development requires that the HEI be receptive. An institution that is willing to acknowledge their needs, establish priorities, decide how and on what terms professional development will take place, and assess the outcomes,[197] operating on a coordinated basis with other performance evaluation programmes and incentive schemes.[198] See table 6.

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[194] Ana García-Olalla, "El Portafolio Docente: Un instrumento para evaluación y mejora de la práctica docente," *Revista CIDUI* 2 (2014): 1-13.

[195] Benilde García-Cabrero, Javier Loredo, and Guadalupe Carranza, "Análisis de la práctica educativa de los docentes: pensamiento, interacción y reflexión," *Revista Electrónica de Investigación Educativa* 10 (2008): 1-15.

[196] Juny Montoya, "Evaluar las evaluaciones: Diseño puesta a prueba de un sistema de evaluación para el mejoramiento de la docencia en unidades," *Revista iberoamericana de evaluación educativa* 5, no. 1 (2012): 48-58.

[197] Beatrice Ávalos, "El desarrollo profesional continuo de los docentes: lo que nos dice la experiencia internacional y de la región latinoamericana," *Revista Pensamiento Educativo* 41, no. 2 (2017): 77-79.

[198] ANECA, "Programa DOCENTIA (Programa de apoyo para la evaluación de la actividad docente del profesorado universitario). Integración y actualización de la documentación del Programa," *2015. v1*, 2015, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/13305/164819/file/DOCENTIA_nuevadoc_v1_final.pdf.

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4.7. *Dimension 7: Degree programme review and improvement*

This Dimension is related to Dimension 3, which deals with degree programme design. In this way the process comes full circle, and a number of mechanisms are highlighted that need to be put in place to review and improve the degree after it has been designed and implemented. These mechanisms are intended to ensure that a systematic review and improvement process takes place; and that this process is open, flexible, relevant and objective, by welcoming multiple voices and perspectives to participate.

Certain institutional conditions need to be created to facilitate the review and improvement process, including: identifying needs, designing improvement plans, and incorporating the changes required as they are proposed, with no need to obtain external approval.[199,200] For the sake of objectivity, and to ensure that a rigorous process takes place, a person or a body could be entrusted with the monitoring tasks (one that is preferably different from the person or the body in charge of planning and implementing the changes).

Another key aspect at this stage is involving different agents in the process, particularly in terms of identifying the areas to be improved.[201,202,203] In addition to consulting faculty members, the points of view of students, graduates and employers should be included. Students are in a privileged position to detect any potential overlapping areas and shortcomings in the degree programme, and also to identify any mismatches between the level of competences at the

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[199] Mario de Miguel et al., *Adaptación de los planes de estudio al proceso de Convergencia europea* (Madrid: Dirección General de Universidades, MEC – Programa de Estudios y Análisis para la mejora de la calidad de la enseñanza y de la actividad del profesorado universitario, 2004).

[200] Ana García-Olalla, "Estándares para evaluar la calidad docente," in *La Innovación Educativa para transformar la sociedad multicultural: El papel de las Universidades*, ed. Aurelio Villa (Bogotá: FIIU, 2014).

[201] Julia González and Robert Wagenaar, eds., *Tuning educational Structures in Europe. Universities contribution to the Bologna Process. Final Report. Pilot Project – Phase 2* (Bilbao: University of Deusto and University of Groningen, 2006).

[202] Pablo Beneitone, César Esquetini, Julia González, Maira Maletá, Gabriela Siufi, and Robert Wagenaar, eds., *Reflexiones y perspectivas de la educación superior en América latina. Informe Final – Proyecto Tuning – América Latina, 2004/2007* (Bilbao and Groningen, University of Deusto, 2008).

[203] ANECA, "Documento Marco: Evaluación para la renovación de la acreditación de títulos oficiales de Grado, Máster y Doctorado," 2016, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12737/157930/file/acredita_documentomarco_v4b.pdf.

start and the level of attainment throughout their learning process.[204,205,206] The contribution of graduates is critical, because they are aware of the programme's strengths and weaknesses as regards future employability and performing other roles in society. Employers and other members of society who are involved in graduates' entry into the job market and society itself have a good knowledge of the needs and requirements for this to happen successfully.

It is important that faculty members act on a collegial basis, as the degree programme is the result of a collective effort and its coherence and integrity must be preserved.[207,208,209,210] The teaching staff should: have mechanisms that promote a structured reflection on how their module contributes to the acquisition of the competences provided in the graduate profile; receive suggestions from different agents; and create spaces where faculty members within the same degree can share their views and design a joint improvement plan.[211,212,213] See table 7.

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[204] Catherine Bovill, Cathy Bulley, and Kate Morss, "Engaging and empowering first-year students through curriculum design: perspectives from the literature," *Teaching in Higher Education* 16, no. 2 (2011): 197-209.

[205] Catherine Bovill, Alison Cook-Sather, and Peter Felten, "Students as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design, and curricula: implications for academic developers," *International Journal for Academic Development* 16, no. 2 (2011): 133-145.

[206] Simon Brooman, Sue Darwent, and A. Pimor, "The student voice in higher education curriculum design: is there value in listening?," *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 52, no. 6 (2015): 663-674.

[207] ENQA, *Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area* (Helsinki: ENQA, 2005), http://www.enqa.net/bologna.lasso.

[208] ENQA, *Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area* (Brussels, Belgium, 2015), http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/.

[209] Julia González and Robert Wagenaar, eds., *Tuning educational Structures in Europe. Universities contribution to the Bologna Process. Final Report. Pilot Project – Phase 2* (Bilbao: University of Deusto and University of Groningen, 2006*)*.

[210] Pablo Beneitone, César Esquetini, Julia González, Maira Maletá, Gabriela Siufi, and Robert Wagenaar, eds., *Reflexiones y perspectivas de la educación superior en América latina. Informe Final – Proyecto Tuning – América Latina, 2004/2007* (Bilbao and Groningen, University of Deusto, 2008).

[211] Aurelio Villa and Ana García-Olalla, "Un sistema de garantía de calidad de la docencia: un estudio de caso," *Revista Electrónica Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado* 17, no. 3 (2014): 65-78.

[212] ANECA, "Guía de Apoyo para la redacción, puesta en práctica y evaluación de los Resultados del Aprendizaje," 2013, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12765/158329/file/learningoutcomes_v02.pdf.

[213] ANECA, "Documento Marco: Evaluación para la renovación de la acreditación de títulos oficiales de Grado, Máster y Doctorado," 2016, http://www.aneca.es/content/download/12737/157930/file/acredita_documentomarco_v4b.pdf.

5. **Discussion and conclusions**

The Bologna Declaration marked the beginning of a profound university reform that introduced, among other aspects, a CBL approach that advocates the overall development of students, both in specific and transversal competences. This approach is intended to enable them to adapt to and successfully address the issues and changes emerging in a complex, globalised world. Introducing it has not been an easy task, as it involves transforming the previous ways of doing things and affects the different areas and processes of university education. This study provides a comprehensive model for the analysis and assessment of the degree of implementation of CBL in the different universities. The proposed model seeks to make an original contribution, as it is a comprehensive 7-dimension model of analysis, with individual criteria and indicators for each dimension. While some partial analytical models have been proposed that have focused on a particular dimension of analysis, no comprehensive models have been found in the literature that are similar or an alternative to the one described here.

From the seven dimensions included in the model, two review the contextual aspects that surround the implementation of CBL: the national regulatory framework and the HEI's regulatory framework. Three dimensions describe the process for the development of CBL in the institution, which concerns degree programme design, module planning and teaching practices. The last two dimensions analyse the outcomes obtained and review the planning process, both on a degree and on a module basis. The breakdown of each dimension into criteria and indicators resulted from a literature review that focused on the most important aspects to be assessed in each of the dimensions. Although the model has been evaluated by eight experts, it would be interesting to test it through individual interviews or focus groups with university lecturers and managers. In fact, it is going to be tested in two Latin American universities during the next academic year. Also, even though the model has been developed in the context of Spain (as part of the European Union) and Latin America, it would be desirable that it may be contrasted with possible good practices in other regions of the world, and in particular in institutions where Tuning project has been implemented.

This model is not intended to be a single, finished model, but to serve as a framework for HEIs interested in evaluating the degree of implementation of CBL in their degree qualifications, so that they can adapt and reach a consensus through participatory processes within their institution. It is also essential to bear in mind that the university context is ever-changing and therefore, the model seeks to be dynamic and subject to changes and updates.

The model can serve as a basis for the design of different assessment instruments according to the dimensions identified, from a quantitative, qualitative or mixed perspective. Both the model presented here and any tools that may result from it would be ultimately aimed at guiding the analysis of the situation and the decision-making process, so that they contribute to improving the acquisition of competences among university students.

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Tables

Table 1

Dimension 1 - Criteria and indicators

Dimension 1: Legal and administrative context	
Criteria	Indicators
1.1. There is some legislation in place that promotes Higher Education innovation and incorporates Competence-Based Learning (CBL) and/or student-centred learning.	1.1.1. The need to promote a change in Higher Education focused on CBL is justified.
	1.1.2. The innovation process is based on student-centred learning.
	1.1.3. University autonomy is recognised.
	1.1.4. The importance of collegiality among faculty members is emphasised.
	1.1.5. Higher Education cycles are harmonised and recognised. This is regulated on the basis of competences (bachelor, master and doctorate) (framework for degrees/qualifications).

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Dimension 1: Legal and administrative context	
Criteria	Indicators
1.2. There is guiding legislation on how to develop a competence-based degree.	1.2.1. It is specified that learning objectives must be formulated in terms of competences.
	1.2.2. Generic (transversal or key) competences and degree-specific competences are differentiated.
	1.2.3. The importance of student-centred methodologies is specified.
	1.2.4. The need to define student workload and work time is established. This translates into a credit system.
	1.2.5. The need to use competence-based assessment is specifically stated.
1.3. Higher Education institutions and Education Authorities or delegated agencies/ organisations have put in place mechanisms or procedures to certify and supervise degrees, including references to CBL.	1.3.1. There are external official mechanisms for certification and improvement at university, degree and teaching levels put in place by the Education Authorities or delegated agencies/ organisations.
	1.3.2. There is a demand for an internal system for quality assurance and improvement at university, degree and/or teaching-learning levels.
1.4. There is governmental support available (financing, training, teaching innovation and improvement, incentive programmes…) for implementing CBL.	1.4.1. Funding is made available for teaching staff training in connection with CBL implementation.
	1.4.2. Funding is made available for projects for the design and introduction of competence-based degrees.
	1.4.3. Funding is made available and incentives are provided for research projects and/or university teaching innovation for CBL implementation.
	1.4.4. Funding is made available for the human and material resources necessary to implement the changes involved in CBL.

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Table 2

Dimension 2 - Criteria and indicators

Dimension 2: Institutional context	
Criteria	Indicators
2.1. CBL is included in institutional documents (policy and strategy and pedagogical model).	2.1.1. Reference is made to CBL in the mission, vision and strategic plan.
	2.1.2. The university has a teaching and/or training model that includes CBL.
	2.1.3. The university defines a number of key competences to be acquired by students.
	2.1.4. Institutional documents referring to CBL are publicly shown on the university's website.
2.2. There is support for CBL from the organisational structure.	2.2.1. There must be at least one person responsible for CBL implementation in the Vice-Chancellor's/governing team.
	2.2.2. At institutional level, there is a technical office/unit that promotes and provides support for CBL.
	2.2.3. The centres/faculties have a structure to bolster and organise CBL.
	2.2.4. Administrative processes and services are in line with CBL.
2.3. There are guidelines for developing mechanisms for the design, approval and supervision of competence-based degrees and teaching guides.	2.3.1. The institution has formal mechanisms (procedures and protocols) in place for the development of competence-based degrees.
	2.3.2. The institution has formal mechanisms (procedures and protocols) in place for the approval, monitoring and periodic review of competence-based degrees.
	2.3.3. The institution has formal mechanisms (procedures and protocols) in place for the development of competence-based programmes and teaching guides.
	2.3.4. The institution has formal mechanisms (procedures and protocols) in place for the approval, monitoring and periodic review of competence-based programmes and teaching guides.

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Dimension 2: Institutional context	
Criteria	Indicators
2.4. There are procedures for the selection, development, assessment and/or certification of teaching and administrative and services staff.	2.4.1. There are competence-based procedures for the selection, development, assessment and certification of teaching staff.
	2.4.2. Informative and work meetings/awareness workshops/courses are held on CBL.
	2.4.3. The university has devised some mechanisms to detect teaching staff needs for the adequate development and improvement of its degrees.
	2.4.4. The university has mechanisms to detect administrative and services staff needs for the adequate development and improvement of its degrees.
	2.4.5. The university promotes and supports faculty members' involvement in innovation and/or research informed by CBL.
	2.4.6. The university offers training to its teaching staff with a view to carrying out any improvements identified to be necessary for adequate CBL implementation.
	2.4.7. The university offers training to its administrative and services staff with a view to carrying out any improvements identified to be necessary for adequate CBL implementation.

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Table 3

Dimension 3 - Criteria and indicators

Dimension 3: Degree planning process	
Criteria	Indicators
3.1. There is a curriculum that defines the competences to be acquired in the degree and explicitly states how certain competences are acquired within a given subject (or other equivalent unit).	3.1.1. There is an individual or a commission responsible for the process of development, coordination, monitoring and assessment of the degree programme.
	3.1.2. A degree's purpose and direction is based on a systematic analysis of the background information and the needs and proposals provided by the different stakeholders: academics, students, graduates, employers and other agents involved.
	3.1.3. The professional-academic profile of the degree has been defined. This includes establishing a professional identity, the roles for which it is intended and the areas where professional performance will occur.
	3.1.4. The learning objectives of the degree are defined in terms of the competences students will acquire while working towards it.
	3.1.5. The degree explicitly differentiates between generic competences and specific competences to be worked on.
	3.1.6. The degree programme establishes how teaching is to be organised (by subjects or other equivalent units) and identifies each of its constituent units. A certain workload is stipulated to be carried out, inside and outside class (e.g. credits)
	3.1.7. There is a competence map (or equivalent procedure) which outlines the competences to be acquired within each subject (or other academic units that the degree is structured into). This shows that it is an integrated formative/educational project.
	3.1.8. The degree programme establishes the use of active methodologies that place the student at the centre of the learning process, and are in accordance with the type of competences to be acquired.
	3.1.9. The degree programme establishes the use of methods and techniques that assess the extent to which the competences described have been achieved, both throughout the learning process and in terms of final outcomes.
	3.1.10. The degree programme provides a mechanism to establish the extent to which the relevant competences have been acquired. This operates on a coordinated, collegial basis.

Dimension 3: Degree planning process	
Criteria	Indicators
3.2. Faculty members involved in the delivery of the degree programme define how competences will be achieved in their respective subjects (or equivalent units). They do so by engaging in joint procedures and decisions.	3.2.1. The individual responsible for the degree programme establishes and/or puts in place the necessary mechanisms (meetings, documentation) to ensure the coordinated planning of the degree, through an integrated approach of the subjects (or equivalent units) within it.
	3.2.2. The faculty and other individuals responsible for degree design and implementation agree on and define how the various competences should be included in each of the subjects/modules.
	3.2.3. The teaching-learning and assessment methodologies to be used in the subjects (or equivalent units) are discussed and agreed upon in order to diversify and coordinate the learning scenarios proposed to students.
	3.2.4. Learning and/or assessment activities are planned on a joint basis for different subjects, in order to promote an overall, integrated acquisition of the competences.
	3.2.5. Distribution of student workload among each of the subjects is discussed with a view to favouring continued balanced work.
	3.2.6. Assessment of the extent to which the degree's competences are achieved is carried out on a coordinated and transversal basis (horizontal and/or vertical).
	3.2.7. A record is kept of the decisions taken with regard to degree coordination.

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Table 4

Dimension 4 – Criteria and indicators

Dimension 4: Subject/Module planning process	
Criteria	Indicators
4.1. The contribution of the subject to the graduate profile is described and competences are specified.	4.1.1. The lecturer contextualises and describes the purpose for the subject (or equivalent unit) and its contribution to the academic-professional graduate profile.
	4.1.2. The lecturer clearly sets out the prerequisites for students and the relationship between their module and the other modules in the degree.
	4.1.3. The programme and/or study guide establishes the generic competences to be acquired within a given subject in accordance with the competence map, and specify the aspects to be worked on.
	4.1.4. The programme and/or study guide define the specific competences to be acquired within the subject, in accordance with the competence map, and specify the aspects to be worked on.
4.2. Appropriate teaching-learning strategies for the acquisition of competences are detailed.	4.2.1. Lecturers design a teaching strategy that is coherent with the competences students need to work on, and with the principles of autonomy and meaningful learning.
	4.2.2. Lecturers detail the activities to be carried out and the estimated time for completion, according to the principles of autonomy and meaningful learning. The overall workload/ time assigned to each subject/module (or assigned credits where applicable) needs to be respected.
	4.2.3. Lecturers provide a detail explanation of the documentation and support resources to be used for the proper monitoring of the subject/module and completion of the activities included in the programme.
	4.2.4. Lecturers establish the procedures, schedules and spaces to monitor, tutor, and guide student learning.

Dimension 4: Subject/Module planning process	
Criteria	Indicators
4.3. An assessment system is developed that is appropriate to the competences students are to acquire (formative and summative assessment).	4.3.1. Lecturers formulate the learning outcomes and/or indicators that will be used to assess and provide feedback to students on the extent to which they have acquired their competences.
	4.3.2. Lecturers choose the techniques and instruments to be used to gather the information relevant to the learning outcomes and/or selected indicators, both throughout and at the end of the process.
	4.3.3. Lecturers provide detailed information about the marking scheme (the weighting of each competence/indicator towards the final mark), which reflects the extent to which the competences have been acquired, both throughout the process and upon completion of the module programme.

Table 5

Dimension 5 – Criteria and indicators

Dimension 5: Teaching/learning practices and assessment	
Criteria	Indicators
5.1. Active methodologies and appropriate resources (resources, ICT, activities, spaces) are used to ensure the competences for the module can be achieved.	5.1.1. The teaching conditions for the delivery of the modules (number of students, spaces, classrooms) are appropriate to the type of module and the competences to be acquired.
	5.1.2. The lecturer informs students of the generic and specific competences to be worked towards in the module/subject, the methodologies to be used and how competences are to be assessed.
	5.1.3. The methodologies used are coherent with the competences to be worked on within the modules.
	5.1.4. The methodologies encourage students to take an active role in their teaching/learning process.
	5.1.5. Varied methodologies (PBL, cooperative learning, case studies) and/or different techniques (simulation, debates, competitions, role-playing) are used.
	5.1.6. Proposed activities are contextualised and real (they are authentic tasks).
	5.1.7. ICT is used to support the teaching/learning process.
	5.1.8. Teaching resources are adapted to the teaching/learning methodologies.

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Dimension 5: Teaching/learning practices and assessment	
Criteria	Indicators
5.2. The lecturer uses tutorials to guide and support the teaching/learning process.	5.2.1. Lecturers guide and support students throughout the teaching/learning process.
	5.2.2. Both teaching-learning oriented tutorials (intended to monitor the modules) and guidance tutorials (to provide personal and professional advice) are integrated in order to ensure that the module is appropriately delivered.
5.3. Acquisition of competences by students is assessed by using appropriate criteria and techniques.	5.3.1. Assessment is coherent with the competences to be worked on within the modules.
	5.3.2. Both generic and subject-specific competences are assessed.
	5.3.3 A variety of assessment techniques and instruments are used.
	5.3.4. The assessment process is transparent: students know the instruments, criteria, indicators and weightings involved.
	5.3.5. There is formative assessment, which helps students to adjust their learning according to the feedback received.
	5.3.6. Students know when formative and summative assessment is used.
	5.3.7. Students receive quantitative and qualitative feedback on their work.
	5.3.8. ICT is used to support the assessment process.
	5.3.9. Different agents participate in the assessment process: lecturers (module leaders), their colleagues and students.

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Table 6

Dimension 6 - Criteria and indicators

Dimension 6: Subject/Module review and improvement	
Criteria	Indicators
6.1 Lecturers analyse teaching and learning outcomes, and propose and take actions for improvement.	6.1.1. Lecturers reflect on their teaching practices by analysing the relationship between the extent to which the competences have been acquired by their students and the teaching and assessment methods used.
	6.1.2. Lecturers reflect on the assessment by relying on different sources involved in their teaching process: students, colleagues, managers and their own experience.
	6.1.3. Lecturers identify the strengths and weaknesses in their teaching.
	6.1.4. Lecturers identify specific changes and changes for students to improve their competence-based learning for the following year.
	6.1.5. Lecturers document their reflections and discuss them with their line managers or within their department.

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Table 7

Dimension 7 - Criteria and indicators

Dimension 7: Degree review and improvement	
Criteria	Indicators
7.1 There are mechanisms for degree review and improvement	7.1.1 There are relevant mechanisms for gathering student feedback/assessment in order to identify the areas that need improvement and innovation at degree level (referring to graduate profile).
	7.1.2 There are relevant mechanisms for gathering graduate feedback/assessment in order to identify the areas that need improvement and innovation at degree level (referring to graduate profile).
	7.1.3 There are relevant mechanisms for gathering employer feedback/assessment in order to identify the areas that need improvement and innovation at degree level (referring to the graduate profile).
	7.1.4 There are mechanisms for lecturers to continuously monitor whether their module/subject makes a suitable contribution to the attainment of the competences to work towards in relation to the graduate profile.
	7.1.5 The review and improvement of the degree programme is carried out continuously among the teaching staff on a collegial basis, by looking at aspects to improve, and relying on the feedback received from other stakeholders (students, graduates, employers).
	7.1.6 Improvement plans are drawn up that include the changes identified to be necessary.
	7.1.7 There are flexible processes enabling the inclusion of the improvements identified in the review reports ('in real time' and 'without external approval').
	7.1.8 The process for the implementation of improvement plans is monitored/followed up.
	7.1.9 The person/body in charge of improvement monitoring/ follow-up is different from the one responsible for planning the improvement itself.

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Hybrid solutions for didactics in higher education: An interdisciplinary workshop of 'Visual Storytelling' to develop documentation competences

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Abstract: The article reports on the results of a Design-Based Research path realized through a workshop about the "Visual Storytelling" (VS). The workshop aimed to develop teacher's professional competences about digital narrative documentation to be certified through the Open Badge system. The interdisciplinary design was developed according to the ICT-TPACK framework between the two courses "Methodologies, Didactics and Technologies for Teaching" and "Educational Research" in the Master's degree in Primary Teaching. 32 students were involved to deal with the documentation of some real educational experiences observed at school. They were asked to fill a semi-structured questionnaire at the end of the workshop. Other data came from a rubric used to evaluate VS products from three different points of views (students' self-assessment; university teachers; school teachers). The workshop stimulated the students to use technologies creatively, critically and reflectively to develop an authentic task realizing a VS product. According to the students' opinion, the workshop also facilitated collaborative processes as well as skills of self-assessment and the personalization of learning.

Keywords: Teacher training; ICT; hybrid solutions; narrative digital documentation; educational design; assessment skills; higher education.

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I. **Theoretical background**

The challenge for a quality improvement of the competence- based teaching and learning is engaging more and more Higher Education institutions into considering learner-centred models[1] in the direction of a computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL[2]) to form knowledge-building communities.[3]

Various researches underline how changes in didactics are possible only if we think about a process dealing with the educational design and the use of technology, together with the modification of teaching beliefs.[4]

In university teaching, there are various ways of seeing/perceiving Hybrid Instruction Solutions (HS).[5] The reason for this lies in the concept of "hybrid", i.e. the mixing of different teaching approaches in the most varied of combinations when proposing learning activities aimed at achieving one or more educational goals. Even if the usually most emphasized aspect of HS is the alternation between face-to-face and distance learning activities, the concept of "hybrid solution" actually refers to different methods and teaching tools integration. In fact, HS implies a mix of various teaching approaches, either exclusively face-to-face or distance teaching, or their combination.[6]

The hybrid solutions encourage innovative educational practices and meaningful learning. These should be designed to support collaborative and

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[1] David Jonassen, Kayle Peck, and Brent Wilson, *Learning with technology: A constructivist approach* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merril, 1999).

[2] Antonio Calvani, Antonio Fini, and Maria Ranieri, *La Competenza Digitale nella scuola. Modelli e strumenti per valutarla e svilupparla* (Trento: Erickson, 2010).

[3] Marlene Scardamalia, John Bransford, Bob Kozma, and Edys Quellmalz. "New assessment and environments for knowledge building," in *Assessment and teaching of 21st century skills*, ed. Patrick Griffin and Esther Care (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012); Jo Tondeur, Pareja Roblin, Johan van Braak, Joke Voogt, and Sarah Prestridge, "Preparing beginning teachers for technology integration in education: Ready for take off?," *Technology, Pedagogy and Education* 26, no. 2 (2016).

[4] David Kember, "Promoting Student-Centred Forms of Learning across an Entire University," *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning* 58, no. 1 (2009); Khaterine Samuelowicz and John Baine, "Revisiting academics' beliefs about teaching and learning," *Higher Education* 41, no. 3 (2001); Guglielmo Trentin, "Orientating Pedagogy Towards Hybrid Learning Space," in *Progress in Education*, ed. Roberta Nata (Hauppauge N.Y.: Nova Science Publishers Inc., 2015); Guglielmo Trentin, "A Multidimensional Approach to e-Learning Sustainability," *Educational Technology* 47, no. 5 (2007).

[5] Guglielmo Trentin, "Orientating Pedagogy Towards Hybrid Learning Space," in *Progress in Education*, ed. Roberta Nata (Hauppauge N.Y.: Nova Science Publishers Inc., 2015).

[6] Guglielmo Trentin, "Orientating Pedagogy Towards Hybrid Learning Space," in *Progress in Education*, ed. Roberta Nata (Hauppauge N.Y.: Nova Science Publishers Inc., 2015).

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learner-centred instruction. Hybrid solutions consider a complete form of assessment, usually the assessment for learning.[7] Three main design principles should be employed in an HS workshop: (a) engage the learners in active and collaborative instruction, (b) involve the learners in assessment processes, and (c) reuse students' artefacts as a resource for further learning.[8]

To prepare students for teaching soft skills need to be developed: creativity and innovation, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, local and global citizenship, and digital literacy.[9] Educational design should consider the advancement of digital literacy to make students active knowledge producers through the responsible, effective and proficient use of ICT for personal, social and cultural development.

Together with the development of digital literacy,[10] the introduction of ICT into didactics asks the teacher to use the integration between the disciplinary (content), methodological and technological knowledge. This concept is stressed in the researches about TPCK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge).[11]

ICT-TPCK, a theoretical framework proposed by Angeli and Valanides,[12] is the background of the research.

Also in Higher Education this framework requires the development of some specific design skills from the teacher: 1) to identify the content

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[7] Guglielmo Trentin, "Orientating Pedagogy Towards Hybrid Learning Space," in *Progress in Education*, ed. Roberta Nata (Hauppauge N.Y.: Nova Science Publishers Inc., 2015).

[8] Guglielmo Trentin, "Orientating Pedagogy Towards Hybrid Learning Space," in *Progress in Education*, ed. Nata Roberta (Hauppauge N.Y.: Nova Science Publishers Inc., 2015).

[9] Marina De Rossi, "Questioni metodologiche, soft skill e integrazione delle ICT/ Methodological demands, soft skill and ICT integration," *Formazione & Insegnamento. Rivista internazionale di Scienze dell'Educazione e della Formazione* 15, no. 1 (2017); Maria Ranieri and Isabella Bruni, "e-MEL. Un laboratorio blended per lo sviluppo delle competenze digitali e mediali dei futuri insegnanti," *MEDIA EDUCATION* 8, no.1 (2017).

[10] Ala-Mutka, *Mapping digital competence: towards a conceptual understanding* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2011).

[11] Punja Mishra and Matthaew Koehler, "Technological pedagogical content knowledge: a framework for integrating technology in teacher knowledge," *Teachers college record* 108, no. 6 (2006); Charoula Angeli and Nicos Valanides, "Preservice elementary teachers as information and communication technology designers: An instructional system design model based on an expanded view of pedagogical content knowledge," *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, no. 21 (2005); Charoula Angeli and Nicos Valanides, "Epistemological and methodological issues for the conceptualization, development and assessment of ICT_TPCK: Advances in Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge," *Computers & Education* 52, no. 1 (2009); Laura Messina and Marina De Rossi, *Tecnologie, formazione e didattica* (Roma: Carocci, 2015).

[12] Charoula Angeli and Nicos Valanides, "Technology mapping: An approach for developing technological pedagogical content knowledge," *Journal of Educational Computing Research* 48, no. 2 (2013).

domains to be taught by ICT; 2) to identify the appropriate representations to transform the content domains in educational effective formats which are difficult to support by traditional media; 3) to identify teaching methods, difficult or impossible to carry out with other media; 4) to select technologies with affordance suitable for points 2 and 3; 5) to link digital activities with opportune learner-centred strategies.

Moving from the ICT-TPCK,[13] a tool of educational design for ICT integration was used to design the workshop.[14] This tool includes the seven classic elements (context, aims, time, content, skills, methodology, and evaluation) and other new four elements:

1) ICT.

2) Learning activity types[15] made available by the learning environment (Moodle).

3) Personal devices (Smartphone or Tablet) as expressions of knowledge.

4) New knowledge representations within a software platform (see the concept of multiliteracies[16]).

The integration of ICT in teaching can be useful to stimulate students to produce digital artefacts conceived as authentic tasks: for example through Digital Storytelling or Visual Storytelling (VS).[17] Using VS (Visual Storytelling) is a powerful instructional technique providing an exceptional learning experience for students. As confirmed by the literature about artifacts of digital narration,[18] we characterize these design differences, together with interactivity and messaging, in terms of the balance between

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[13] Charoula Angeli and Nicos Valanides, "Technology mapping: An approach for developing technological pedagogical content knowledge," *Journal of Educational Computing Research* 48, no. 2 (2013).

[14] Messina and De Rossi, "Tecnologie, formazione e didattica"; Laura Messina, Marina De Rossi, Sara Tabone, and Pietro Tonegato, "Formare i futuri insegnanti a progettare la didattica integrando le tecnologie," in *Teach Different!*, ed. Marina Rui, Laura Messina, and Tommaso Minerva (Genova: Genova University Press, 2016).

[15] Judy Harris and Mark Hofer, "Technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) in action: A descriptive study of secondary teachers' curriculum-based, technology-related instructional planning," *Journal of Research on Technology in Education* 43, no. 3 (2011).

[16] Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis (eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[17] Ellen Maddin, "Using TPCK with Digital Storytelling to Investigate Contemporary Issues in Educational Technology," *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies* 7 (2012).

[18] Edward Segel and Jeffrey Heer, "Narrative Visualization: Telling Stories with Data," *IEEE Transactions on Visualization and Computer Graphics* 16, no. 6 (2010).

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the narrative flow intended by the author (imposed by graphical elements and the interface) and the story discovery on the part of the reader (often through interactive exploration).[19] When digital stories are shared on the Web, students have the opportunity to view the work of others. They learn cultural differences, gain experience with the process of peer review to expand their own knowledge. McLellan[20] confirmed that digital storytelling, which also includes VS, helps students explore the meaning of their own experience, give value to it, and communicate the experience on multiple levels to others.

Recently, many interesting studies on this topic were developed in relation with to different educational contexts (formal, non-formal and informal). They pointed out the value of digital narration, especially for the young generations.[21] Digital narration has proven to be an innovative topic also in the teachers' training and in the school world.[22]

Using stories to develop literacy is one of the oldest styles of education, but VS allows the development of the different types of literacy needed in the 21st century: information, visual, technology, and media. Robin[23] indicated that students who create digital stories improve several different technological skills aligned with the development of Digital Literacy.

Therefore, teachers should learn effective ways to motivate their students to become engaged in learning new content with the help of multimedia technologies.[24]

VS entails the use of digital media in the creation of media-rich stories to be told, shared and preserved.[25] The result is usually a brief story created with

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[19] Grete Jamissen, Pip Hardy, Yngve Nordkvelle, and Heather Pleasants, eds., *Digital Storytelling in Higher Education. International Perspectives* (New York: Springer, 2017).

[20] Hilary McLellan, "Digital storytelling in higher education," *Journal of Computing in Higher Education* 19, no. 15 (2006).

[21] Maria Ranieri and Isabella Bruni, "Mobile storytelling and informal education in a suburban area: a qualitative study on the potential of digital narratives for young second generation immigrants," *Learning, Media and Technology* 38 (2013).

[22] Maria Ranieri and Isabella Bruni, "Digital and media literacy in Teacher Education: Preparing undergraduate teachers through an academic program on digital storytelling," in *Handbook of Research on Media Literacy in Higher Education Environments*, ed. Jayne Cubbage (Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2018); Maria Ranieri and Isabella Bruni, "e-MEL. Un laboratorio blended per lo sviluppo delle competenze digitali e mediali dei futuri insegnanti," *MEDIA EDUCATION* 8, no.1 (2017).

[23] Bernard Robin, "Digital storytelling: A powerful technology tool for the 21st century classroom," *The College of Education and Human Ecology, The Ohio State University* 47, no. 3 (2008).

[24] Halah Ahmed Alismail, "Integrate Digital Storytelling in Education," *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6, no. 9 (2015).

[25] Joe Lambert, *Digital storytelling cookbook* (Berkeley: Digital Diner Press, Berkeley, 2007).

digital tools, based upon some fundamental elements: a focused narration through the visual and presentation of emotional and involving contents. In particular, it's a matter of using images, drawings, graphics, animations or videos for the documentation or videos that are intended to create an imaginary and to narrate a story in which people can immerse themselves. VS takes full advantage of the images' to engage the public at a deep level, guaranteeing an immersive experience constituted by identification and empathy. The potential of digital narrations offered by VS is therefore suitable for the development of processes of educational documentation.[26] In fact, the potential of the visual, rather than just written or oral text, facilitates for the users the comprehension of the context and of the educational actions.

Today, the idea of documentation as narration includes new thoughts derived from theoretical research and technological development. Several researches identified the drive towards digital skills and the multiplicity of communication channels as two fundamental aspects of the new way to organise and transfer knowledge.[27] Students have their own individual approach based on their interactions and experiences and generate narrative outputs by using different sources in their creation of the digital story. These findings are in line with those reported by other researchers who observed that digital narrations support constructivist learning and concluded that in general digital narrations are a good method of teaching with positive impacts.[28]

This perspective seems to be in line with the development of some skills wished for in the 21st century: critical thinking, creativity, communication, reflection and metacognition.[29] In the creation of digital narrations, these skills can be developed through different processes. First of all decision making can be stimulated by the design of the documentation-storyboard and by the action of observation and the collection of information. Then it's important to consider the creativity in the creation of documentation and in

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[26] Alaa Sadik, "Digital storytelling: a meaningful technology-integrated approach for engaged student learning," *Education Tech Research Dev* 56, n. 4 (2008).

[27] Roberto Raieli and Perla Innocenti, *Multimedia informational retrieval: metodologia ed esperienze internazionali di content-based retrieval per l'informazione e la documentazione* (Roma: AIDA, 2004); Marina De Rossi and Graziella Gentilini, *How to produce documentation to relate teaching and training experiences* (Padova: Cleup, 2007).

[28] Pi-Sui Hsu, "Examining changes of preservice teachers' beliefs about technology integration during student teaching," *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education* 21, n. 1 (2013).

[29] John Hattie, *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning* (New York, NY, US: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2012); Michael Fullan and Maria Langworthy (eds.), *How New Pedagogies Find Deep Learning* (London: Pearson, 2014).

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the way of communicating it, and finally, reflection and metacognition in the debriefing phase on the documentation have to be considered.[30]

In this sense, digital narrative documentation is a creative and flexible tool for the search for languages and communication models. These models can be useful for the development of a narration potential that can improve its own effectiveness.[31] The most recent studies attribute great importance to the narrative methodologies used as a means to the development of learning. When narrative methodology becomes a documentation tool, it allows the empowerment of subjects and communities.[32]

From a documentation point of view, it is necessary to record complex activities and share best practices.[33] The power lays in connecting two different worlds: the one of narration, reflexivity, interpretation, and assessment on one side, and the world of new media and innovative technological tools on the other.[34]

Educational documentation collected using digital narration approach makes it possible to define several elements of the didactic action:[35]

- The nature of learning processes and the cognitive/emotional strategies adopted by each child and by the group.
- Professionals' actions in educational-didactic experiences.
- Choice and use of methods, techniques, and tools in everyday practices.
- Social and cultural dimension of the educational actions carried out.
- Strategic choices and the purposes of action.

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[30] Margot Boardman, "'I know how much this child has learned. I have proof!' Employing digital technologies for documentation processes in kindergarten," *Australian Journal of Early Childhood* 32, n. 3 (2007).

[31] Hilary Seits, "The Power of Documentation in the Early Childhood Classroom," *Young Children*, March (2008).

[32] Janice McDrury and Maxine Alterio, *Learning through Storytelling in Higher Education* (London: Kogan Page, 2003).

[33] De Rossi and Gentilini, "How to produce documentation to relate teaching and training experience".

[34] Marina De Rossi and Corrado Petrucco, *Le narrazioni digitali per l'educazione e la formazione* (Roma: Carocci, 2013).

[35] Marina De Rossi and Emilia Restiglian, *Narrazione e documentazione educativa. Percorsi per la prima infanzia* (Roma: Carocci, 2013).

II. **Design and Methodology**

During the planning of the research design, the "crucial crux" we have to deal with is the educational design[36] because it's the *ground* where we can operationalize technological knowledge in the sense that it allows to "act" that knowledge.[37]

The general idea of our research, already tested in an exploratory study in another Master's degree,[38] is to transfer some ideas for the teaching of ICT skills into university syllabuses for teacher education. This, to renew the teaching of digital skills and promote the confident use of ICT for future teachers.

The research questions of this study were: Can the creation of a VS develop professional competences for narrative digital documentation? Is an interdisciplinary and ICT-enhanced design workshop able to develop cross-sectional competences?

The research involved pre-primary and primary pre-service teachers in an integrated educational design approach.[39] They were thirty-two 2nd year students (28 Female and 4 Males, 15% sporadic experiences at school), a convenience sample as they voluntarily decided to participate in the workshop.

Participants were involved in a 24 hours blended workshop (observation of educational activities at school; work in university classrooms; online work) during the Academic Year 2017-18. The intervention in the university classrooms considered active learning lessons, work in the Moodle platform and use of the Mobile Storytelling Tool.

Students agreed to participate in the research and they authorized the researchers and to the use and process of data for the purpose of the present study. In our research, we used two tools: a semi-structured questionnaire (16 close-ended questions and two open questions) and a rubric.

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[36] Jorma Enkenberg, "Instructional design and emerging teaching models in higher education," *Computers in Human Behavior*, 17, no. 5-6 (2001); Diana Laurillard, *Teaching as a design science* (London: Routledge, 2012).

[37] Judy Harris and Mark Hofer, "Technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) in action: A descriptive study of secondary teachers' curriculum-based, technology-related instructional planning," *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 43, no. 3 (2011).

[38] Marina De Rossi and Emilia Restiglian, "The experience of ICT integration in Higher Education: Digital Storytelling for educational documentation," in *9th annual International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation – Conference Proceedings*, ed. Luis Gómez Chova et al. (Valencia: IATED Academy, 2016).

[39] Charoula Angeli and Nicos Valanides, "Technology mapping: An approach for developing technological pedagogical content knowledge," *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 48, no. 2 (2013); Messina and De Rossi, "Tecnologie, formazione e didattica."

The self-assessment online exit questionnaire was anonymous and all the VS products were closed to people external to the study. The aim was to investigate students' opinions and it was administrated at the end of the workshop.

The questionnaire comes from a process of adaptation of other tools and theoretical models provided in literature[40] and it consists of two kinds of questions:

a) Quantitative questions on some specific aspects of the workshop in the perspective of educational design according to the ICT-TPCK model.

   This part is composed of 16 close-ended questions arranged in four dimensions:

   1) Integration processes of ICT into didactics (4 items: The use of the Moodle platform helps the work with mates; The use of the Moodle platform allows a personalization of the timework during the workshop; The use of ICT in the documentation helps your knowledge representations; The use of ICT in the documentation improves the processes of assessment).

   2) Workshop activities (4 items: The activities are appropriate for your learning needs; There is coherence between the educational aims, methodologies, and technologies proposed; The activities help the reflective processes in your work; The steps/the process to build the VS are taken into account for the final assessment of the workshop).

   3) Competences about didactics and evaluation (4 items: I improved my skills about the definition of the educational aims by building the storyboard for documentation; I improved my skills about the definition of educational assessment by reflecting on documentation; I improved my skills about observation during the activities proposed at school; The use of the video developed the re-representation of the observed processes).

   4) VS (4 items: I think that the VS is an effective tool of documentation; The educational material given as support was useful; The use of your personal device with the Mobile Storytelling Tool facilitate the documentation work; The documentation with VS allows a more effective communication to external people, e.g. community, families).

[40] Herbert Marsh and Michael Bailey, "Multidimensionality of students' evaluations of teaching effectiveness: A profile analysis," *Journal of Higher Education* 64, no. 1 (1993); Herbert Marsh and Michael Dunkin, "Students' evaluations of university teaching: A multidimensional perspective," in *Higher education: Handbook on theory and research*, ed. John Smart (New York: Agathon Press, 1992).

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b) Qualitative questions in order to formulate some general and overall comments about the whole experience.

In each quantitative dimension, a set of statements is proposed and participants are asked to state their agreement on a 4- point Likert scale. This solution was chosen to eliminate the neutral position common in 5- and 7-point Likert scales, being still accepted in literature[41]. To determine the scale's reliability and internal consistency, the Cronbach's alpha was calculated (0.865) and proved the reliability of the tool. (Fig. 1)

Fig. 1
Cronbach's Alpha

Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1a	41,50	29,032	0,416	0,861
1b	41,31	27,899	0,743	0,850
1c	42,44	28,770	0,368	0,863
1d	42,19	27,641	0,423	0,862
2a	42,09	27,378	0,612	0,852
2b	42,50	28,000	0,617	0,853
2c	42,53	29,612	0,304	0,865
2d	42,00	28,387	0,541	0,856
3a	42,50	26,839	0,525	0,856
3b	42,63	28,629	0,430	0,860
3c	42,19	28,157	0,603	0,854
3d	42,72	27,112	0,540	0,855
4a	42,31	28,609	0,247	0,875
4b	42,50	27,677	0,598	0,853
4c	42,69	26,609	0,661	0,849
4d	41,84	27,233	0,621	0,851

[41] Domenica Fioredistella Iezzi, *Statistica per le scienze sociali* (Roma: Carocci, 2009); Piergiorgio Corbetta, *La ricerca sociale. Metodologie e tecniche. II Le tecniche quantitative* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003).

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The other tool was the rubric (4 levels) used to evaluate some elements of VS products built to document activities the students observed at school.[42] The same rubric was used by students to self-assess their work, by university teachers to evaluate the product as part of the exam and by school teachers to have an external and expert point of view. In this sense, it was possible to speak of a *true documentation skill* which involves ICT and assessment.[43]

III. **The Intervention**

The intervention consisted of the realization of an integrated workshop, seen as an additional activity to two courses within the Bachelor's degree in Primary Education for future pre-primary and primary teachers. The "Methodologies, Didactics and Technologies for Teaching" and "Educational Research" courses were held in the same semester for a duration of 42 hours each. Respective teachers designed a multidisciplinary workshop in a blended modality for a duration of 24h. These were in line with each course's educational aims and the students' assessment in these would be part of their final evaluation along with the courses' exams. The steps of the workshops will be presented below.

Step 1

a) Theoretical preparation on digital narrative documentation at school (with university teachers).

b) Six hours of observation at school (internship) to observe and to gather material useful to the documentation (with school teachers).

Step 2

a) Familiarization activities with tools and technologies for documentation in a specific area in the Moodle platform.

b) Exploration of the Mobile Storytelling Tool.

c) Reflection learning in small groups by using the forum to design the storyboard to build the VS.

d) Analysis of some video tutorials about VS creation.

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[42] Najat Smeda, Eva Dakich and Nalin Sharda, "The effectiveness of digital storytelling in the classrooms: a comprehensive study," *Smart Learning Environments* 1, n. 6 (2014).

[43] De Rossi and Restiglian, "Narrazione e documentazione educativa. Percorsi per la prima infanzia".

e) Individual VS creation on a significant activity observed during the internship activity at school (wiki for the writing of the storyboard; other open resources for the realization of the "digital artefact"- Mobile Storytelling Tool).

f) Peer debriefing at the end of the VS creation.

g) Fill in of a questionnaire for self-assessment.[44]

The workshop was conceived as a sort of mental space even before being a physical one: a space in which the student can be, think, create, try, share and choose things.[45]

The creation of the storyboard (step 2-c) always considers six semantic areas crucial to any educational documentation:[46]

1) *Project area* (analysis of needs, feasibility, goals). This is the project synthetic description area that outlines the experience to be documented.

2) *Methodological area* (techniques, strategies, management). This is the methodology, work tools, strategies and experience management description area. The theoretical inputs and choice justification are important at this point.

3) *Communication area* (target for the documentation, foreseen use, communication supports, tools). This is the area in which the documentation is communicated internally and externally.

4) *Contextual area* (spaces, schedules, organisation, resources, and target). This is the area of the description (visualisation) of the context and the environment in which the experience is taking place. It includes theoretical recall of choice justification.

5) *Experience area* (activities, contents). This is the area for the description of the educational activities (steps; relation child/adult and child/child; class climate).

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[44] Marina De Rossi and Emilia Restiglian, "To be a competent documentalist. The experience of preservice educators of early childhood with the digital storytelling," in *Educating for the future*, ed. Eystein Arntzen (Brussels: ATEE aisbl, 2014).

[45] Emilia Restiglian, *Progettare al nido. Teorie e pratiche educative* (Roma: Carocci, 2012).

[46] De Rossi and Restiglian, "Narrazione e documentazione educativa. Percorsi per la prima infanzia"; De Rossi and Restiglian, "To be a competent documentalist. The experience of preservice educators of early childhood with the digital storytelling," In *Educating for the future*, ed. Eystein Arntzen (Brussels: ATEE aisbl, 2014).

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6) *Observation and assessment area* (tools). This is the area in which the observation methods and tools are described. It includes an explanation of the assessment process/result indexes.

7) *Professional reflective autobiography area* (reflection on the experience, self-assessment, re-planning). This is the area where the teacher's (or the team of teachers') point of view is described. Strengths and weaknesses, criticalities and resource streamlining are highlighted here. The self-assessment concerns the choices made, the results obtained, and one's own role in the whole process. In this case students observed and they gather the class teachers' reflection through a brief final conversation.

Going through all seven semantic areas makes it possible to collect a complete documentation. It is essential to define the used methodologies, as well as space and time context, the recipients of the documentation (internal and external users; colleagues; educational professionals; families; municipalities; financing bodies; management bodies;...). These require different levels of observation and assessment tools, e.g. being much more specific when documenting to the colleagues' advantage.

IV. **The questionnaire results**

The survey involved the total population, as the filling of the questionnaire was a compulsory step required when attending the workshop. This allowed a 100% response rate.

Below, the reader can find some results of the univariate analysis (Fig. 2). In this way a general picture of the students' opinions at the end of the workshop can be described. The study is descriptive and in the present discussion we will mainly deal with the description of some analyses, compared: the distribution by the mode (Mo), the Median (Me) and percentages for each of the 18 items.

The highest values are related to the first (1) dimension, especially in the personalization of the student's work times (Mo=4). The Moodle platform is very well known by the students who use it as support of frontal lessons. Furthermore, the platform allows them to access materials whenever they want and need, according to their needs and to their motivation. Also, the work with peers is improved (Mo=4) because the platform offers many occasions to interact with other students, e.g. with the forum or the blog.

Figure 2
Answers to the questionnaire

Statistics		N	Mean	Median	Mode	Dev. st.	Variance
		Valid					
The use of the Moodle platform helps the work with mates	1a	32	3,56	4,00	4	0,504	0,254
The use of the Moodle platform allows a personalization of the timework during the workshop	1b	32	3,75	4,00	4	0,440	0,194
The use of ICT in the documentation helps your knowledge representations	1c	32	2,63	3,00	3	0,609	0,371
The use of ICT in the documentation improves the processes of assessment	1d	32	2,88	3,00	3	0,751	0,565
The activities are appropriate for your learning needs	2a	32	2,97	3,00	3	0,595	0,354
There is coherence between the educational aims, methodologies and technologies proposed	2b	32	2,56	3,00	3	0,504	0,254
The activities help the reflective processes in your work	2c	32	2,53	3,00	3	0,507	0,257
The steps/the process to build the VS are taken into account for the final assessment of the workshop	2d	32	3,06	3,00	3	0,504	0,254

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Statistics		N	Mean	Median	Mode	Dev. st.	Variance
		Valid					
I improved my skills about the definition of the educational aims by building the storyboard for documentation	3a	32	2,56	3,00	3	0,759	0,577
I improved my skills about the definition of educational assessment by reflecting on documentation	3b	32	2,44	2,00	2	0,564	0,319
I improved my skills about observation during the activities proposed at school	3c	32	2,88	3,00	3	0,492	0,242
The use of the video developed the re-representation of the observed processes	3d	32	2,34	2,00	3	0,701	0,491
I think that the VS is an effective tool of documentation	4a	32	2,75	3,00	3	0,842	0,710
The educational material given as support was useful	4b	32	2,56	3,00	3	0,564	0,319
The use of your personal device with the Mobile Storytelling Tool facilitate the documentation work	4c	32	2,38	2,00	3	0,660	0,435
The documentation with VS allows a more effective communication to external people (e.g. community, families)	4d	32	3,22	3,00	3	0,608	0,370

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Regarding the second (2) dimension (the workshop activities) the four items had the same mode (Mo=3). The analysis of this dimension was useful in particular for the item 1d which addresses the assessment in the university didactics. Students generally appreciated that the efforts done during the workshop would have been considered for the final exam.

In the third (3) dimension students could give their opinions about what competences they achieved about didactics and evaluation. The ones about observation (3c; 3d) like the one about the building of the storyboard are the competences students think to had achieved most (Mo=3).

The last (4) dimension focused on the perception of the students on the VS and the mode was 3 for all the four items. It is a good result because it is very important for the teachers, and the schools, to *make the learning visible*, to make people understand what they propose, how they work, how pupils learn. Students deem VS is an effective tool of documentation and think that the use of the platform supports the exchange of the documented experiences.

The median for the majority of the items is on value Me=3 with the exception of items 1a and 1b where it reaches the value Me=4 with reference to the integration of ICT. Here, the use of the platform to implement a hybrid teaching modality seems to encourage opportunities for group collaboration and time customization. The median of Me=2 in items 3d and 4c concerning the use of the video to report on the observed processes and the Mobile Storytelling Tool to facilitate the documentation work. This last data could derive from the students' inexperience, as it was their first time with this kind of teaching and learning experience.

Additional information comes from the analysis of the answers' percentages (Fig. 3).

With reference to the percentages of the questionnaires, we will report here only the most interesting data.

In dimension 1, all respondents gather around "agree" and "strongly agree" in considering the platform as a facilitator for group work (item 1a). 75% of the students strongly agree that the use of the platform helped the personalization of the work times during the workshop (item 1b).

In the second dimension about the workshop activities, 66% of the students felt that these were appropriate for their learning. Another interesting fact is that 86% of the students agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that the proposed activities developed reflective processes.

In general, the third dimension was the most difficult to understand for the participants because it required a metacognitive process that was too high for second year students. Consequently, there were also percentages of low agreement in the items. However, for the purpose of the research, it is

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interesting to note that 75% of the students agree with the statement of item 3c concerning the observation skills implemented in a real situation (at school).

The fourth dimension required a critical assessment of the use of the tool (VS), which was not assumed to be simple to implement for documentation purposes. 59% of the students agreed on the usefulness of the material given to support the VS making in the workshop. Moreover, more than half of the respondents understood the actual usefulness of the documentation with VS for the communication that the school should have with families, territory and community.

Figure 3

Percentages of Questionnaire's Results

1a				1b				1c				1d			
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
0	0	14	18	0	0	8	24		14	16	2	0	11	14	7
0%	0%	44%	56%	0%	0%	25%	75%	0%	44%	50%	6%	0%	34%	44%	22%
2a				2b				2c				2d			
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
0	6	21	5	0	14	18	0	0	15	17	0	0	3	24	5
0%	19%	66%	16%	0%	44%	56%	0%	0%	47%	53%	0%	0%	9%	75%	16%
3a				3b				3c				3d			
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2	13	14	3	1	16	15	0	0	6	24	2	4	13	15	0
6%	41%	44%	9%	3%	50%	47%	0%	0%	19%	75%	6%	13%	41%	47%	0%
4a				4b				4c				4d			
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2	10	14	6	1	12	19	0	3	14	15	0	0	3	19	10
6%	31%	44%	19%	3%	38%	59%	0%	9%	44%	47%	0%	0%	9%	59%	31%

Regarding the qualitative aspects, in the questionnaire the following questions were proposed:

1) What aspects of ICT integration do you consider the most important?

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2) What methodological and assessment aspects do you think should be improved?

These questions allowed us to deduce some insights and keywords about strengths and weakness of activities.[47] The answers were analyzed with content analysis, finding categories in the ex-post phase. Open questions were important for the students to freely express themselves after the workshop. It was a useful feedback to highlight some concrete aspects of ICT integration, including suggestions and proposals to improve the overall quality of the interdisciplinary workshop (Fig. 4).

Figure 4

Content analysis of the open questions

N.1 Integration of technologies into didactics	N.2 Methodological and assessment aspects that I would change
To promote learning (7) To increase the group participation (8) To increase motivation (10) To foster the realization of a professional task as a teacher (12) To promote collaborative learning (13) To help a better development of what have been learned in the course (18) The video technology helped to make the educational documentation more effective (20)	The methodology of VS could be used also in other educational contexts, different from the documentation (17) The weighted assessment should be more important for the final evaluation because the work was hard to carry on (21)

Many students considered video technology a very good help to make the educational documentation more effective (20 students) and appreciated the possibility to deepen the contents of the course (18). Using Moodle platform they could cooperate (13) and with the workshop they could perceive themselves as teachers (12). The increase of the group participation and the promotion of learning also emerged (8 and 7 students). It is interesting to note that 17 students suggested the dissemination of the workshop on documentation also in other educational contexts. What they asked for most

[47] Arjuna Tuzzi, *L'analisi del contenuto. Introduzione ai metodi e alle tecniche di ricerca* (Roma : Carocci, 2003).

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is the weighted assessment: 21 students declared that the activity of the workshop should have greater value in the weighted mean of the grade exam.

V. **Realization of the VS and three-way product evaluation**

VS as a product was assessed with a rubric to the three groups of subjects involved in the research. It was assessed according to the seven semantic areas of the documentation we mentioned before. To evaluate VS products we used a four level rubric (1 = very inadequate; 2 = inadequate; 3 = adequate; 4 = very adequate). (Fig. 5)

Figure 5

Rubric of VS

Level	1-Inadequate	2-Not completely adequate	3-Adequate	4-Very adequate
Project	The project's topic is not explained	Ideas/Aims/ Stages are missing	There are all the design elements	The design elements are complete, concise, effective
Methodology	Methods, strategies and tools are not highlighted	Methods, strategies and tools are just mentioned	Methods, strategies and tools are clear	Methods, strategies and tools are explained and supported by theoretical references
Communication	Not adequate to the target Lack of narrative coherence Mistakes about digital production (times, images, music, rhythm)	Coherent Some little mistakes about production	Adequate Coherent	Adequate Coherent Effective Engaging

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Level	1-Inadequate	2-Not completely adequate	3-Adequate	4-Very adequate
Context	The context of the educational experience is not underlined	The context of the educational experience is just outlined	The context of the educational experience is described in its basic elements	The context is related with the educational experience
Experience	There is a lack of description	The description doesn't underline all the steps of the experience	The description is complete	The description is complete and underlines the meaning of the educational experience
Observation/ evaluation	There is a lack of description about tools of observation and assessment	The description about tools of observation and assessment is not completely made explicit	The description about tools of observation and assessment is complete	The description about tools of observation and assessment is complete and reflective
Reflection/ debriefing	Not present	Superficial	Descriptive	Complete and accurate

The rubric was used to evaluate the documentation process realized with VS by:

a) Students (self-assessment of their VS artefact).

b) University teachers.

c) School teachers (at the institutions where the educational experience reported in VS took place).

A graph of the mode (Mo) of the overall assessments by the three subject groups is reported below. The graph shows all the areas considered in the production of the VS documentation. (Fig.6)

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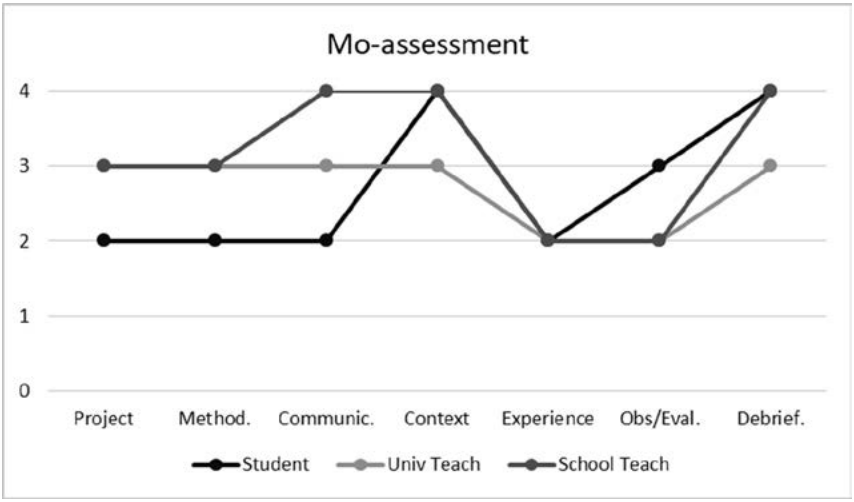
Fig. 6
Assessment of the VS (Mo)



From the assessment's analysis of each documental area, it can be noted that the positioning of the mode is different in most cases.

Only in the documentation area on the educational experience observed at school, all the three groups are positioned on level 2 (not completely adequacy). This area clearly showed a lack of information about the elements essential to understanding what really happened at school. Instead, the documentation of the educational context observed (space, materials, pupils' disposition, tools…) has been assessed by students and school teachers with a high level (Mo=4) and by university teachers with a good level (M=3).

Students assessed their VS product more critically (Mo=2) in the areas of the project documentation, from which they would have inferred the educational experience, the methodology used and overall communication's aspects in the class.

The assessments of the area about the use of observation and evaluation tools employed at school are positioned on the same level (Mo=2) both for university teachers and for school teachers. It seems that this area has a high grade of complexity for students in their second year of Higher Education, being them just at the beginning of their internship at schools, as organized in the initial teacher education course which lasts five years.

In general, students of the 2nd year tend to tell the experience (e.g. the internship expected in their course degree) as if it was a chronicle ("I did", "I

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saw" ...), making it difficult to grasp the complex sense of the educational actions observed at school. They also tend not to use an appropriate and specific language in their descriptions.

The reason behind this could be the complexity of decoding educational actions. In fact, decoding requires critical thinking and active metacognition. It was important to use the area of debriefing during the VS realization to work on this process because it stimulated the students to observe and document, paying attention to the reflection in action. The assessments of the three groups of subjects positioned on good levels (Mo=3 for university teachers and Mo=4 for students and school teachers).

The multimedia production of the VS workshop seems to have promoted the critical evidence. This aspect is reflective and projective and it's useful for the development of teacher professional skills.

VI. **Discussion**

We try here to develop the discussion starting from the research questions. The first was about the possibility to create a VS to develop professional competences for narrative digital documentation. The second concerned the possibility to develop cross-sectional competences through an interdisciplinary and ICT-enhanced workshop design.

To answers to the questions, our work has been based on the learning of documentation skills, meaning the capacity of building digital narrative documentation. Among the various definitions of competence, we chose the one meaning "the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.[48] The competence about documentation allows school teachers to communicate their work to the family and to the community. The teacher's competence about documentation also facilitates the creation of professional learning communities and allows processes of monitoring and self-assessment of their own work.

What we experimented in the workshop, even with the limitations we will explain in the conclusions, reveals quite interesting elements settled in the literature already cited, about:

- The efficacy of the ICT integration into didactics to stimulate students to produce authentic tasks.

[48] Recommendations 2008/C 111/01.

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- The possibility for the students to explore the meaning of their own experience, giving value to it, and communicating it to others on multiple levels.

In order to assess competence, therefore, it is not possible to refer only to the possession of knowledge, basic skills and attitudes, it is also necessary that such qualities are used in contexts that require a performance.[49] This performance can coincide with an authentic task as the VS we proposed in the workshop.

A true task should motivate students and help them learn how to manage concrete, real-life situations using their knowledge and skills to develop something new. The choice of a task that would involve multiple learning dimensions for the student was not meant to cause problems for the students, but, rather, to help them apply what they had learned.

A true task puts the student inside a real-life situation, in our case the world of the school. The documentation has several functions, for instance, to evaluate the proposed educational activities.

Again with regard to the assessment, we worked within a theoretical framework[50] that takes into account several points of view: the *objectivity* of the university teacher who evaluates the product, the *subjectivity* of the producer of the digital construct (the student, as a form of self-assessment) and the *intersubjectivity* of the school teacher.

In this way, we tried to join the traditional role of the teacher as an evaluator with that of an active student able to carry out a metacognition process concerning his/her own work.

VII. **Conclusions**

The present research shows some limitations in the fact that it had to be adapted to the curricular context of the Primary Teaching Course Degree, which did not widely include a HS design option nor an inter-disciplinary point of view. This led to a reduced sample choice (convenience sampling), considering also that students were free to participate or not. In addition, the group was perhaps still inexperienced as only on their second year of pre-service education. The research design included only the rubric as a qualitative tool for the products' assessment, as part of the course's final evaluation. The survey could have been made more complete and in-depth by using, together

[49] Guy Le Boterf, *Repenser la compétence* (Paris: Eyrolles, 2010).

[50] Michele Pellerey, *Le competenze individuali e il portfolio* (Roma: ETAS, 2004).

with the questionnaire, other tools, as the focus group, or by expanding the sample including older students. This would be interesting in particular to understand the actual training potential of ICT-TPCK design procedures for the development of skills in hybrid learning contexts. However, from the information gathered through the data analysis (questionnaire and rubric) we can discuss some interesting elements for possible future experiences in teaching courses degrees.

Our work could continue, with similar modalities, in other courses of the same course degree and in other course degrees for the training of different professional figures.

The experience is useful for pedagogic studies that aim at training competent professionals (hard skills and soft skills), but, above all, persons that are cognizant and "reflective" person, able to adapt knowledge, skills, and attitudes, according to the specific context in which they are working.

Finally, this formative path is very useful for our work as university teachers, as it provides innovative indications, especially for interdisciplinary planning, in order to make students active participants in their learning experience and producers of culture.

The introduction of a workshop in the Higher Education curriculum can represent a strong incentive for university teachers:

a) To integrate the ICT design in teaching.

b) To develop an interdisciplinary design in order to give greater coherence and unity to the curriculum.

c) To develop skills and not only knowledge.

d) To assess students by authentic tasks connected with the professional life.

In conclusion, we think the introduction of a workshop like this in the Higher Education curriculum could help supporting students in their learning processes for the development of transversal skills. The ICT use in workshop-based teaching could foster digital competences, active and collaborative learning, and enable concrete experiences of reflective learning through the peer review processes.

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Editors' Acknowledgments

Editors' Acknowledgments

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Luigi F. Donà dalle Rose
Anna Serbati
May 19th, 2019

Guidelines for Authors

Guidelines for Authors

VERSION 1ST MAY 2019

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Tuning Journal for Higher Education, TJHE, is a joint academic publication of the University of Deusto (Spain) and the University of Groningen (Netherlands). It is published by the University of Deusto on behalf of the two institutions. It appears twice a year, in May and November, in both digital and print formats. Its first Issue was published in November 2013.

It is an international peer-reviewed journal publishing in English original research studies and reviews in all aspects of competence-based, student-centred, and outcome-oriented education reforms at university level across the globe. The Journal publishes both thematic and unsolicited contributions on pressing educational needs of contemporary societies. At any time of the year, the Journal welcomes submissions related to its scope and focus. The submitted manuscript should not have been previously copyrighted or published in any form, including electronic media and databases, and must not be currently under consideration for publication elsewhere. Manuscripts under consideration for publication in Tuning Journal cannot be submitted elsewhere without formal withdrawal approved by the Editor.

These Guidelines should be used with reference to the *TJHE Ethical Guidelines for Publication*, *Peer Review* instructions, and *Copyright Notice*; all of which are available at the web page of the Journal (http://www.tuningjournal.org/).

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To expedite the review process, please format your manuscript as follows:

1. Prepare your manuscript as a single editable Microsoft Word or Open Office document with line numbering, using the template downloadable from the web page of the Journal (http://www.tuningjournal.org/about/submissions#authorGuidelines). The file should include the complete text, references, tables and figures. All revised manuscripts should again be sent as a single editable document.
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6. Please ensure that all the characters and special characters in the text, tables, figure legends, footnotes and references are in a single typeface and point size – such as 12 pt Times New Roman. Once a manuscript is accepted, a copy editor will decide the typeface and size of the different elements of the article.
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In OJS, editorial correspondence related to a manuscript is reserved for the person who actually submits the manuscript in question. In cases of various authors, the submitting author is the sole co-author with access to the manuscript and related files and correspondence. It is therefore important that the corresponding author, referred to as "Principal contact for editorial correspondence" in OJS terminology, be the actual submitter of the manuscript.

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Currently, *Tuning Journal for Higher Education* uses a double-blind peer review system: mandatory anonymity for both the reviewer and reviewed author throughout the review process. In line with the TJHE Ethical Guidelines for Publication, the editorial staff uses the TURNITIN software to verify the originality of manuscripts submitted to the Journal.

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The Editor hands each manuscript accepted for review to a member of the Panel of Advisory Editors, who will control the review and revision process of that manuscript.

The Editor will prepare a decision letter based on the comments of the reviewers and the recommendation of the Advisory Editor, which will be sent to the corresponding author by email.

It is our intention that all non-reviewed manuscripts will be sent back within 21 days of submission acknowledgement and that a first decision letters for manuscripts will be sent within 8 weeks of receipt.

In cases of required revision work, a second editorial decision letter will be sent after assessment of the revised version within 11 weeks (in case of "Revisions Required") or 12 weeks (in case of "Resubmit for Review") of initial receipt.

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Under the coordination of the Managing Editor (ME), accepted manuscripts are copyedited for publication. For each copyediting round, authors normally have up to three (3) working days to act upon suggested changes. Once copyediting is completed, the ME assigns a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) to each paper before moving it to the typesetting and proofreading stage. By email attachment, authors receive PDF proofs

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TJHE
Ethical Guidelines for Publication

TJHE Ethical Guidelines for Publication

FINAL VERSION (MARCH 2015)

Tuning Journal for Higher Education (TJHE), Tuning Journal in short, is an international journal publishing in English original research studies and reviews in all aspects of competence-based, student-centred, and outcome-oriented education reforms at university level across the globe. It is published by the University of Deusto's Publications department on behalf of the International Tuning Academy (Tuning Academy in short), a jointly managed project of the Universities of Deusto (Spain) and Groningen (The Netherlands). The Journal, essentially an open access, online and peer-reviewed publication, is committed to maintain the highest ethical standards. Hence, the involvement of any stakeholder in any function connected with TJHE, including acting as an editor, the reviewing of manuscripts, the management and production of the Journal and the authorship and submission of manuscripts implies acceptance of and adherence to **TJHE Ethical Guidelines for Publication**.

* The term *Editor(s)* as used below refers to Editors, Advisory Editors, Guest Editors, and Editorial Board members when delegated to serve in an editorial capacity.

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1.1. The Editorial Board is appointed by the Tuning Academy in consultation with the Universities of Deusto and Groningen.

1.2. The Editorial Board is responsible for setting policy, appointing the Editor and Advisory Editors of the Journal.

1.3. The Editor is responsible for ensuring that publication policies set by the Editorial Board are carried out.

1.4. The Management Board is appointed by the Tuning Academy in consultation with the Universities of Deusto and Groningen.

1.5. The Managing Board is responsible for the commercial management of the Journal and appointing a Managing Editor.

1.6. The Managing Editor is responsible for ensuring that the commercial policies set by the Management Board are carried out.

1.7. Members of the Editorial or Management Boards or employees and, or members of the Tuning Academy should not intervene in or comment on editorial decisions on individual manuscripts.

2. Editors, Advisory Editors, and Guest Editors

2.1. *Editors* of the Journal and Specialist Volumes are expected to carry out editorial duties in a manner consonant with policies set by the Editorial Board.

2.2. The Editor has full responsibility, which he/she may delegate to an Advisory Editor, for editorial and technical decisions on Journal and specialist volume content.

2.3. *Editors* will give manuscripts unbiased consideration.

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2.4. *Editors* should process manuscripts expeditiously.

2.5. The Editor has sole responsibility for acceptance or rejection of a manuscript. Manuscripts should have peer review, but the Editor may reject any manuscript for other causes (inappropriate for journal, clearly of poor quality, contents previously published elsewhere, etc.)

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3.1. Manuscripts should contain original, new results, data, ideas and/or interpretations not previously published or under consideration for publication elsewhere (including electronic media and databases).

3.2. Authors should be encouraged to avoid fragmentation of their work where practical, so that the submitted manuscript is as comprehensive and authoritative as possible.

3.3. Authors should inform the Editor of related manuscripts under consideration elsewhere and provide copies if requested.

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3.6. Manuscripts will contain proper citation of works by others, especially publications of the original hypotheses, ideas, and/or data upon which manuscript is based or addresses.

3.7. Authorship

a) Authorship should be limited to those who have made significant contributions to the concept, design, execution or interpretation of the work reported in a manuscript; others who have contributed should be acknowledged;

b) Author order should be agreed on by all authors as should any changes in authors and order that occur while the manuscript is under review or revision. Changes in authorship must be submitted to the Editor in writing and must be signed by all authors involved.

c) Authors and co-authors should review and ensure the accuracy and validity of results prior to submission; co-authors should have opportunity to review manuscript before submission.

3.8. Authors should reveal to the Editor any potential conflict of interest (e.g., a consulting or financial interest in a company) that might be affected by publication of the results contained in a manuscript. The authors should ensure that no contractual relations or proprietary considerations exist that would affect the publication of information in a submitted manuscript.

3.9. Authors are encouraged to disclose major funding sources (e.g., government agencies, private foundations, private industry, and universities) for reported research.

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4.1. A reviewer should disclose real or perceived conflict of interests to the Editor before agreeing to write a review. Examples include, but are not restricted to, past (within the last 5 years) or current collaboration, close friend, employer or employee, family relationship, institutional relationship, past or present graduate advisor or advisee, someone with whom the reviewer has had a past or on-going scientific controversy, or situations where the reviewer could stand to gain or lose economically or in any other way by publication or rejection of the manuscript. The Editor will decide if the conflict is severe enough to prevent the reviewer from writing a fair, objective review.

4.2. A reviewer should decline to review a manuscript if she/he feels technically unqualified, if a timely review cannot be done, or if the manuscript is from a competitor with whom the reviewer has had an acrimonious professional relationship or a conflict of interest as defined above (section 4.1).

4.3. Reviewers should be encouraged, but not required, to sign reviews. The Editor will preserve anonymity of reviewers should a reviewer elect to remain anonymous.

4.4. Reviewers must treat the manuscript as confidential.

4.5. Reviewers must ask the Editor for permission to discuss the paper with others for specific advice, giving names and reasons for such consultation.

4.6. Reviewers must not pass the manuscript to another to carry out the review without permission from the Editor.

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4.8. Reviewers should clearly support and justify the basis for their review analysis.

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4.9. Reviewers should alert the Editor to similar manuscripts published or under consideration for publication elsewhere in the event they are aware of such. However, it is the responsibility of the Editor, not the reviewer, to decide on the proper course of action once so informed.

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Date: 16 March 2015

Approved by the TJHE Editorial Board and signed on behalf of the Tuning Academy by:

Pablo Beneitone
Director, Tuning Academy (Deusto)

Robert Wagenaar
Director, Tuning Academy (Groningen)

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Tuning Academy

20th Anniversary of the Bologna Declaration: From overview of processes to ongoing activities and experiences

Tuning Journal Volume 6, Issue No. 2, May 2019

Contents

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