Working Group on Learning and Teaching

Ninth Meeting, Online

5 September 2023

14.00-16.00 (CET)

Minutes of meeting

List of participants

Country	Name	Last Name
Armenia	Lilit	Sargsyan
Austria	Alexander	Kohler
Azerbaijan	Samir	Hamidov
Croatia	Vlatka	Blažević
Cyprus	Popi	Appios
ENQA	Anna	Gover
ESU	Andrej	Pirjevic
EUA	Therese	Zhang
EURASHE (outgoing Co-Chair)	Ana	Tecilazić
EURASHE (incoming Co-Chair)	Jon	Altuna
EURASHE	Jakub	Grodecki
EI - ETUCE	Jorunn Dahl	Norgard
France (Co-Chair)	Philippe	Lalle
Georgia	Lali	Giorgidze
Germany	Paul	Klar
Hungary	Flóra	Megyeri
Ireland	Richard	Brophy
Ireland (Co-Chair)	Tim	Conlon
Norway	Alina	Oboza
Romania	Ciprian	Fartușnic
United Kingdom	Neehal	Bajwa
BFUG Secretariat	Oltion	Rrumbullaku
BFUG Secretariat	Patrik	Bardhi

Holy See asked to excuse the absence.

1. Welcome remarks and the approval of the agenda

The Co-Chairs welcomed everybody to the ninth 2021-2024 work period meeting. An outline of the agenda was provided, which was approved. The previous meeting's minutes were approved.

For more information, please see: WG_LT_ES_GA_9_Agenda

2. Information by the co-chairs and the Secretariat

Ana Tecilazić (outgoing Co-Chair) began by announcing that this would be her last meeting with the group. She explained that since June, she was no longer a EURASHE board member, and as a result, her role as co-chair of the group was coming to an end. She then introduced Jon Altuna as the new co-chair, expressing her confidence in his ability to lead the group effectively. Jon Altuna (incoming Co-Chair), in turn, thanked Ana for her leadership and expressed his enthusiasm

for taking over the co-chair position. He provided some background on his professional experience, highlighting his role as the Academic Vice Rector of Mondragon University, and his involvement in European University alliances. Mr. Altuna emphasized that his expertise in quality, accreditation, and educational innovation made him well-suited to contribute to the group's work.

Tim Conlon (Co-Chair) introduced himself to the group, and briefly described his role as Head of Policy and Strategic Planning at the Higher Education Authority in Ireland, responsible as the governing body for the universities and the research system.

During the meeting, a representative from the BFUG Secretariat provided additional information about the activities and duties performed by the Secretariat during this period.

3. Draft statement on Ethics & Digital Technologies in L&T

Lali Giorgidze presented the subgroup's work on ethics and digital technology in higher education. The group's objective was to create a short draft proposal addressing the ethical implications of digitalization and artificial intelligence in higher education. She stated their method of work, including collecting relevant sources on digitalization and conducting a literature review. It was found that many sources focused on the ethical implications of artificial intelligence, even though the topic was ethics in digitalization, showcasing the inherent interconnection between these two domains.

The discussion highlighted four general themes: responsible and ethical use of AI in teaching and learning; the ethical use of data in learning analytics; human rights dimensions; and quality assessment and impact of AI in education.

In relation to the first theme, it was emphasized that some guidelines and recommendations were already written for the ethical use of AI in education. Additionally, it was discussed the necessity of comprehensive training and development programs for both academic staff and students to equip them with the required AI skills. Collaboration and networking among universities was encouraged to find ethical solutions for AI implementation in education. The second theme revolved around the ethical use of data in learning analytics. It was highlighted the need for caution when collecting large-scale data through learning analytics, especially concerning data privacy. The third theme centered on the intersection of human rights and ethical considerations in the adoption of AI. It was emphasized the importance of respecting human rights, particularly the right to privacy and data protection. It was also discussed the need for education and empowerment, ensuring that access to education is available without inequalities. The fourth theme tackled the quality assessment of AI in education. It was stated that public funding should support open research projects to comprehensively assess AI's real impact. It was highlighted the importance of prioritizing human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in the evaluation and adoption of AI in education.

Following the discussion of these four themes, Ms. Giorgidze presented the draft statement on ethics in digitalization. This draft statement aimed to encompass the ethical implications of both digitalization and AI. She suggested to be focused on the length of the statement and discussed the possibility of extracting certain sections to create a more concise version.

Members expressed differing opinions on whether to include learning analytics, with some emphasizing its importance for student success and others concerned about its potential impact on teaching. Ultimately, the group decided to keep learning analytics in the draft statement but consider rephrasing it to reduce the focus on this specific aspect. Some members advocated for a forward-looking approach, anticipating future relevance of learning analytics.

There was a suggestion to capture the topic of learning analytics in the upcoming Peer Learning Activity (PLA) event in October, inviting speakers to further enrich the discussion. It was concluded with a consensus to continue refining this draft statement and explore the topic of learning analytics in more detail during the PLA event in October.

4. Proposal for ministerial commitment on Student Centered Learning

Ana Tecilazić (Co-Chair) opened the discussion about the two separate documents that have been prepared and shared via Google Drive. The first document is a comprehensive contribution intended for the progress report, final report, and the group's work in detail. This document contains extensive discussions and conclusions based on our previous meetings.

She considered the second document, titled the shorter version, as intended for submission to the Drafting Committee. It provides a condensed version of the working group input, which can be integrated into the upcoming Communique. It was suggested to focus the discussion primarily on the shorter version of the document, as it holds more relevance for the Drafting Committee.

4.1 Proposal for ministerial commitment (shorter version) on Student Centered Learning

In relation to the first paragraph of the shorter version, there was a discussion about the wording of a sentence related to student-centered learning principles. Some participants expressed concerns about the term "principles of student-centered learning," as it might lack a clear and universally accepted definition. They suggested rephrasing the sentence to convey a commitment to incorporating student-centered approaches without implying a predefined set of principles.

One participant proposed the revised sentence: "We will incorporate a commitment to student-centered learning into legislation and/or national strategies, etc." This rephrasing aimed to emphasize a commitment to student-centered approaches without specifying defined principles. It was mentioned that the ECTS User's Guide defines student-centered learning. It was also suggested that the principles of student-centered learning should include a focus on students' needs.

In the second paragraph, there was a debate relating to students having control over their learning experience. Some participants suggested using "encouraging students" while others preferred "supporting students." The aim here was to clarify their intention regarding students' involvement in their own learning. After discussing other elements including assessments, the group leaned towards using "supporting students in assuming responsibility for their learning experience, including assessment, …". This phrasing was chosen to emphasize that students should take an active role in their education.

During the discussion, there was a proposal to add the phrase "ensuring the acquisition of future skills and emphasizing critical thinking" to the second paragraph. This addition aimed to stress the importance of students acquiring relevant skills that would be valuable in the future job market. The group generally agreed with this addition, considering it essential to highlight the development of competencies that would prepare students for their future careers.

In the last part of the second paragraph, there was a discussion about the phrase "level social differences." Some participants proposed changing it to "achieve equity " to emphasize the goal of fairness and equal opportunities. The aim was to have a more concise text and to ensure that it clearly conveyed their commitment to reducing disparities in educational opportunities among students from diverse social backgrounds.

In the third paragraph of the proposed shorter version, there was a discussion about the rationale and logic behind two different proposals from the same group. It was raised that having separate contributions that touch on similar topics might not be the most efficient way to convey the group's messages to the Drafting Committee, as they might need to consolidate or choose between the two. The suggestion was made to incorporate the proposal from the ad hoc group that focused on new technologies into the main contribution to avoid redundancy and potential confusion. Additionally, it was proposed to reorganize the paragraphs for better sequence, with the thematic peer learning group mentioned in the third paragraph, followed by the combined input from the ad hoc group, and then the input related to student-centered learning in the last paragraph. This reordering aimed to provide a clearer flow of ideas in the document.

4.2 Proposal for final report on Student Centered Learning

The participants discussed various aspects of the elaborated version of the proposal. It was raised a point regarding the discussion from the previous meeting, suggesting that the focus on student-centered learning should not be limited to initial teacher education but broadened to include all educational programs. After some discussion, it was decided to remove specific references to PhD education and initial teacher training and instead encourage higher education institutions to incorporate student-centered learning into their policies and programs.

It was proposed to simplify the longer version by encouraging higher education institutions to train future teachers to embrace student-centered learning, without going into specific details about programs. It was suggested adding the phrase "future teachers and learners" to emphasize the role of both educators and students in embracing student-centered learning.

In summary, the discussion revolved around broadening the scope of student-centered learning beyond initial teacher education, emphasizing the role of both teachers and learners, and choosing appropriate language to convey the message effectively.

5. Proposal for ministerial commitment on Staff Development

Philippe Lalle (Co-Chair) presented two versions of a text, one shorter and one longer, addressing staff development in higher education. The shorter version was deemed more impactful. Two points were left for discussion: the inclusion of the learning management systems topic and funding for staff development. The learning management systems point might be moved to another document on innovative learning and teaching. Funding was seen as a crucial issue for higher education and should be addressed in relation to both student-centered learning and staff development.

A suggestion was made to include a reference to professional autonomy or academic freedom in the first paragraph. Additionally, a proposal to add "stable employment" before "reasonable teaching loads" and emphasize its importance was discussed.

Other points raised during the meeting included the need to support teachers in developing skills that promote autonomy in learning and whether the short version of the text could be further condensed, possibly using a blue-lining approach to prioritize key points. The term "teaching and learning centers" was suggested as a replacement for "pedagogical support centers." There was also a discussion about the term "scientific approach" in the text and whether it should be retained to emphasize evidence-based practices.

The group recognized the need for a shorter version of the text while ensuring that key points were retained. Further revisions and discussions were planned to refine the text.

6. PLA on transformative approaches to learning and teaching (Ireland, 23-24 October 2023, tbc)

Tim Conlon (Co-Chair) provided information about the upcoming Peer Learning Activity (PLA) event in Ireland, focusing on transformative approaches to teaching and learning. The event is potentially planned for the third week of October, specifically on the 23rd and 24th of October. The location is likely to be in Limerick, a city on the mid-west coast of Ireland with good transportation links. Mr. Conlon mentioned that more detailed information about the event, including the venue and schedule, would be circulated via email to the working group members to facilitate travel arrangements.

7. AOB

It was inquired about the deadline for submitting comments on document versions scheduled for the BFUG Board meeting. The Secretariat clarified the deadline for submitting documents for the BFUG Board meeting as September 17th, with a suggested earlier date of September 11th by the Co-Chairs for the submission of comments.

The meeting concluded with members expressing gratitude to Ana Tecilazić, who had served for almost three years as the Co-Chair of this working group. Ana announced her departure from BFUG but pledged to stay connected and continue following the group's activities through the BFUG's publications.