



**DEVELOPMENT, ASSESSMENT AND VALIDATION
OF SOCIAL COMPETENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**MODEL SOLUTIONS REGARDING DEVELOPING,
ASSESSING AND VALIDATING SOCIAL COMPETENCES
IN HIGHER EDUCATION INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR LEVELS OF: HE INSTITUTIONS,
NATIONAL AND EU POLICY MAKING**





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Intellectual Output 8

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of the project **DASCHE (Development, assessment and validation of social competences in higher education)** is to provide assistance to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as well as national and European policy makers in shaping social competences of students.

The project is implemented in partnership of **University of Bremen (Germany), Academic Information Centre (Latvia), Centre for Higher Education Studies (Czech Republic), University of Durham (United Kingdom), University of Twente (the Netherlands), SGH Warsaw School of Economic (Poland, leader).**

Through the project good practices of programmes which focusing on social competences development were collected in:

COUNTRY	INSTITUTION	COUNTRY	INSTITUTION
CZ	1. Charles University	NL	15. ArtEZ Institute of the Arts
	2. West Bohemia University		16. Radboud University
	3. University of Economy and Management, Prague		17. University of Twente
	4. Medical College of Nursing	PL	18. PWSZ in Elbląg
	5. University of Ostrava		19. Collegium Medicum of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow
DE	6. University of Bremen		20. Lodz University of Technology
	7. University of Konstanz		21. University of Social Sciences and Humanities
	8. University of Cologne		22. SGH – Warsaw School of Economics
	9. Technical University of Dresden	UK	23. University A
LV	10. Riga Stradiņš University		24. University B
	11. School of Business and Finance		25. University C
	12. University of Latvia		26. University D
	13. Riga Technical University		
14. Transport and Telecommunication Institute			

The project formulated recommendations addressed to policy makers and HEIs.

The main recommendation is:

To create room to reflect on designing, developing and assessing social competences of students in Higher Education Institutions.

To run a continuous debate among HEIs, HEIs Associations, Quality Assurance Agencies, Students Associations, employers, NGOs, national and European policy makers about social competences in higher education.

Key words in the project include:

social competences, good practices, cases, qualitative analysis, diversity, teachers, reflection, higher education

INTRODUCTION

The Bologna Process indicates that preparation for living as active citizens in a democratic society is one of the main purposes of higher education. Also other relevant European strategies postulate that social competences development in HE graduates, as well as the European Qualifications Framework should comprise the pillar of "competences: autonomy and responsibility".

Including social competences into curricula and teaching/learning process is difficult. They are multidimensional, involving a variety of learning outcomes concerning ethical, cultural, group and civic-oriented attitudes of learners; they often seem to be meta-competences, which cannot be seen as independent from knowledge and skills. Higher education institutions and national level policy makers need assistance in designing, delivering and validating social competences of students. The systems of internal and external quality evaluation and assurance face the same difficulty, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) do not provide sufficient guidance. The DASCHE project addresses and responds to these needs; the results offer a model solution to the issue. It is aimed at supporting policy learning across and higher education institutions in curricula development, assessment and validation of social competences of students.

Associated partners of the project are: National Unions of Students in Europe (Belgium), European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (Belgium), Council of Higher Education of Latvia (Latvia), University of Cologne (Germany), Czech Rectors Conference (Czech Republic), Students' Parliament of the Republic of Poland (Poland), Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (Poland), Polish Accreditation Committee (Poland), National Representation of PhD Candidates (Poland), National Council for Science and Higher Education (Poland) and the Polish Rectors Foundation – Institute of Knowledge Society (Poland).

The DASCHE project lasts for 32 months from September 2017 to April 2020.

SOCIAL COMPETENCES DEFINITION

One standardized common definition of social competences has not been developed in the DASCHE project. The Latvian brief definition states highlights individual knowledge, while the Czech definition focuses on communication and some professional aspects of education. The German case provides a more precise characteristics, which highlights 3 dimensions: (1) referring to human interrelations; (2) referring to key competences; (3) referring to work-oriented aspects of competences. In Poland one can notice more formal approach, since social competences are directly included into the Polish Qualifications Framework and their descriptors can be used in formulating their general definition. One of the reasons for this differentiation is lack public debate on shaping social competences resulted with lack of clear declarations concerning national public policies concerning the issue. Thus - although diversity of meanings does not inhibit forming social competences by higher education institutions themselves, nevertheless common reflection on the social competences of graduates at national and European levels defining the social competences and affecting public policies could result in a better fulfilment of this essential task of higher education.

COUNTRY	SOCIAL COMPETENCES DEFINITION ADOPTED IN THE PROJECT
PL	Knowledge and skills enriched with motivation for pro-social activity including discussion of values. An attempt to obtain an answer to the question of how (and for what purpose) a graduate intends to use the acquired knowledge and skills, both in professional life and wider social activity, and whether he will do it rationally, autonomously and responsibly. This definition can be developed by using the "social competences" descriptors of the Polish Qualifications Framework.
DE	Traditionally, competence in Germany is defined with Weinert (2001) as "in all individuals available or learnable cognitive capabilities and skills to solve specific problems, as well as the related motivational, volitional and social willingness and skills to be able to successfully and responsibly use those solutions in various situations" (Weinert, 2001, S. 27f.). The German Qualifications Framework relates to this approach, though it does not explicitly define social competences. It rather integrates a number of dimensions of social competences, which appears to be representative for definitions found in the German context. These definitions refer predominantly to the specific context, for which they are formulated. Social competences in a democratic environment can be defined as knowledge, skills and abilities, as well as subsequent motivation and readiness to act based on values that contribute to autonomous and responsible participation in social contexts (citizenship, work and personal life).
LV	Social competences within the context of HE can be defined as the ability of an individual to evaluate and understand the capacity and boundaries of their individual knowledge, skills and attitudes in the cognitive, attitude and behaviour-related dimensions in relation to other individuals, groups and societies.
CZ	Knowledge and skills enriched with the motivation for pro-social activity including a discussion of values. An attempt to formulate an answer to the question of how (and for what purpose) a graduate intends to use the acquired knowledge and skills, both in professional life and wider social activity, and whether he will do it rationally, autonomously and responsibly for social and ecological environment. Social competences involve: autonomy, responsibility (for future), ethics, tolerance to difference, team work, creativity, flexibility, critical thinking, lifelong learning, digital literacy, democratic values, solving problem, flexibility, effective communication and self-presentation).
UK	Social competences are meta-competences (including skills, knowledge, understanding, criticality, ethics) enhancing the ability to adjust, inform and challenge society with the aim of sustainable development. Social competences in higher education are informed by 3 major agendas: a) social justice agenda, b) employability agenda and c) students functioning as partners.
NL	University education should '...transfer knowledge for the benefit of society' (WHW, art. 1.3.1), while '... education also has regard to personal development and encourages social responsibility' (WHW, art. 1.3.5). With regard to UAS education, the statement in the law is limited to professional orientation: '... transmission of scientific knowledge and development of competences in close connection to professional practice' (WHW, art. 1.1.d). In the national qualifications framework, from Level 5 upwards, spontaneously-initiated reflection is expected, which ought to happen largely autonomously from Level 7 upwards, it should also lead to 'technological, social or cultural advances for society' at Level 8. Concerning responsibility and independence, from Level 6 upwards, wider aspects are to play a role, i.e. 'to form an opinion that is also based on weighing relevant social, societal, professional, scientific or ethical aspects'. Yet even at the top level, Level 8, the 'scientific integrity' required is connected with 'a complex fundamental research project'—not with a person's functioning in society in general.

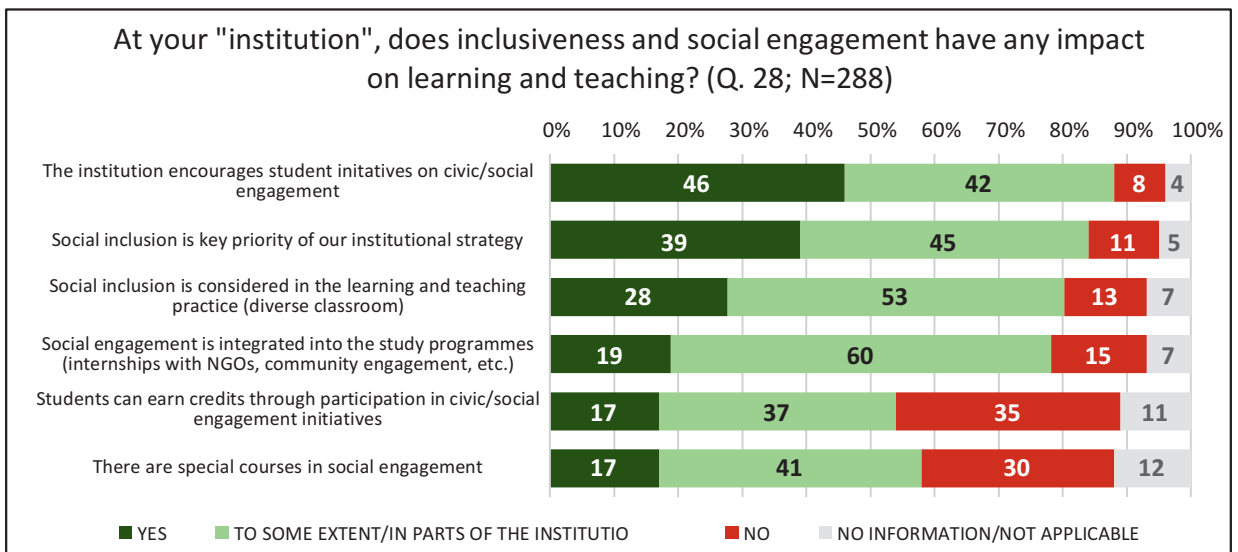
Despite this variety of social competences characteristics, which are determined both by the tradition in higher education and legislative context, we can notice one relevant feature of the above mentioned approaches. All of them recognise social competences as an overall metacompetence, built over knowledge and skills, enriched by axiological reflection, enabling an independent and responsible application of social competences, aimed at common social good.

Why social competences are important?

The challenges posed by social life, related to a continuous change, demographic processes and social exclusion, threats to democracy, expected drop in demand for labour and the ongoing digitalisation, migrations and terrorism, and, last but not least, to climate change, require an adequate response from the systems of education; they should shape the competences enabling to face those challenges.

Thus social competences are increasingly becoming the subject of interest of higher education researchers or, generally, of education. Another crucial aspect of social competences, exceeding the sphere of professional life, are attitudes related to broadly understood social and public life. They can have a form of demonstrated engagement into realization of the Sustainable Development Goals formulated by the UN. They can be related to descriptors of qualifications framework like: to fulfill social obligations – initiate activities on behalf of public interest.

Due to very rapid technological advances and related changes on the labour market, many authors pay attention to social competences in a professional or educational and training (VET) context (see e.g.: Mulder M., Weigl T. & Collins, K., 2006; Sá, M.J., Serpa, S., 2018;). Moreover, universities constitute one of the elements of broadly understood lifelong learning (LLL) (e.g. Walker, M., & McLean, M., 2013). As in case of the "professional aspect", also in this area of the study on social competences there is extensive literature related to lower levels of education (e.g. ten Dam, G. T. M., & Volman, M. L. L., 2007).



Source: EUA 2018: 46.

SOCIAL COMPETENCES DEFINITION

The framework of the current (2018-2020) perspective of the Bologna Process was formulated by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Ministers in the Paris Communiqué of May 25th 2018. In the previous perspective educating students for the needs of the labour market was particularly emphasized. The Paris Communiqué focused on the social responsibility of universities and on shaping social competences of students, directly referring to the sustainable development goals formulated by the United Nations (UN): "We commit to developing the role of higher education in securing a sustainable future for our planet and our societies, and to finding ways in which we, as EHEA Ministers, can contribute to meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals at global, European and national levels." (Paris Communiqué 2018)



Source: UN: 2015

CASES / GOOD PRACTICES (SELECTED EXAMPLES)

The team collected and analyzed examples 26 good practices of designing and developing social competences of students in the following institutions:

COUNTRY	INSTITUTIONS
CZ	1. Charles University
	2. West Bohemia University
	3. University of Economy and Management, Prague
	4. Medical College of Nursing
	5. University of Ostrava
DE	6. University of Bremen
	7. University of Konstanz
	8. University of Cologne
	9. Technical University of Dresden
LV	10. Riga Stradiņš University
	11. School of Business and Finance
	12. University of Latvia
	13. Riga Technical University
NL	14. Transport and Telecommunication Institute
	15. ArtEZ Institute of the Arts
	16. Radboud University
PL	17. University of Twente
	18. PWSZ in Elbląg
	19. Collegium Medicum of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow
	20. Lodz University of Technology
	21. University of Social Sciences and Humanities
UK	22. SGH – Warsaw School of Economics
	23. University A
	24. University B
	25. University C
	26. University D

The detailed descriptions of good practices are presented in the Country Reports (IO2-IO7) at website: www.dasche.eu

The next section contains selected brief descriptions of good practices.

WWW.UTWENTE.NL/TOM

THE TWENTE EDUCATION MODEL



UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.



The University of Twente was founded in 1961 on an explicit philosophy of broad education, currently expressed as 'high tech, human touch'. Reviving this philosophy in a 21st century form, in 2013 all undergraduate programmes were reformed into the Twente Education Model (TOM), which was based on project-based and student-driven learning. All bachelor programmes are structured in 12 modules of 15 EC. Within these modules, students not only learn to be skilled *researchers*, they are educated to become *designers* and *organizers* as well. Each module consists of more or less traditional courses to provide knowledge and skills (10 EC), which the students then must apply in a 5 EC group project that synthesises the previous courses and at the same time is an exercise in project planning, project execution and group work. While in most of the curriculum the focus is on academic and profession-related competencies, students learn to philosophise about their role in society in the course *Reflection on Science, Technology and Society* (RESTS) and they have space for broadening their learning, first, in the 30 EC minor, and second, in extra-curricular offerings, which the UT, still operating from its original philosophy, offers more than most other Dutch universities, e.g. through honours education, the DesignLab, the Science Shop and through the Student Union. Innovative pedagogies are prominent in these offerings: project-based, student-driven, partly challenge-based and in some case focused on community engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutional level:

- Social competences are specific to institutional missions, to their types of students and to their contexts; a one-size-for all approach is not fruitful.

National level:

- The concept of social competences that goes beyond immediate work-place skills and includes constructive citizenship and thought leadership as expected graduate attributes ought to be part of the national expectations on higher education, whether through legislation, national qualifications frameworks or other policy instruments (e.g. stimulating networking and peer learning among higher education institutions across Europe).
- There is no reason for incorporating the requirements regarding social competences education into programme accreditation standards or ESGs, because they are not defined at such level of detail. Accreditation agencies might consider making social competences education part of their assessment of institutional mission and vision with regard to quality of education in their institutional audits.

European Higher Education Area (EHEA) level:

- The European Commission and the BFUG (The Bologna Follow-Up Group) could assist member/EHEA countries to raise awareness levels in their higher education sector concerning European frameworks and expectations with regard to social competences through: information, funding (e.g. making social competences and higher education institutions' community engagement more prominent in Erasmus+).
- Support offered to European policymakers and institutional networks focusing on social competences.

SGH WARSAW SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, CEMS MASTER IN INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MIM), 2nd grade studies, Masters in Management POLAND



CEMS is a one-year programme implemented as part of the master's programme. student completing CEMS receives a diploma of his alma mater and a CEMS diploma. This program is recognized by the Financial Times as a master's degree in management, and in 2018 it ranked 9th on the list of the best MA programs in Europe. The partners of this program are not only universities - currently their number amounts to 32 universities from 5 continents, but also other stakeholders. SGH is the only Polish university in CEMS. Currently (2018) CEMS has over 70 business partners and 7 social partners (including 1 research institute).

CONCLUSIONS

- CEMS (including CEMS in SGH) emphasizes the diversity of forms of education, which results in the fact that the student has a very wide choice of various activities that are recognized by ECTS.
- The lecturers focus on shaping social competences, in particular, by means of group work. Thanks to an efficient quality assessment system, they are able to react quickly to students' comments.
- Students participating in the CEMS Programme are engaged in the education process - this is an important factor contributing to the programme's success.
- The importance of pro-quality solutions in CEMS based on the standards of CEMS.
- The demanding selection/recruitment process helps to select engaged and motivated students.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutional level:

- The condition of an effective education process, including the shaping of social competences is the engagement of students.
- Student engagement can be achieved through an appropriate selection of candidates and diversification of forms of education. A variety of activities in which students participate should be rewarded by ECTS respectively, which allows for their selection and management.
- A support system for teaching social competences should ensure teaching efficiency and quality. One of the main objectives of quality assurance is to provide feedback to academic teachers so that they can implement corrective actions.

National level:

- The quality assurance process does not have to be extended, but it should be expeditious, i.e. the university and the lecturers should receive feedback on the assessment results as soon as possible and instantly implement the recommendations.

European Higher Education Area (EHEA) level:

- An important support for teaching social competences is their inclusion in international CEMS programs.
- An increase in the involvement of students and lecturers should result from the activities supporting and promoting quality in higher education.





University of Latvia (LU) is a public university established in 1919, located in the city of Riga, Latvia; it is the largest HEI in Latvia. LU has approximately 17 000 students and offers 151 study programmes.

LU has 13 faculties and over 20 research institutes and independent study centres, it is one of the largest, most comprehensive and leading research universities in the Baltic countries. LU provides study programmes of all types and of all three Bologna cycles including short cycle.

CONCLUSIONS

- LU mostly focuses on the development of professional skills; therefore, the development of social competences is not separately emphasised in the study process.
- While the development of social competences is not a primary goal of the study process, the teaching/learning process still strengthens students' intelligence, enhancing social competences.
- Lack of support for new students is believed to be one of the reasons why students drop out after the first year of studies.
- The development of social competences is mostly a creative initiative of teachers; therefore, the level of development of students' competences may vary.
- An example of a good practice is the student mentor project, where older students provide necessary support for the younger ones.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutional level:

- To change the approach to teaching/learning process, allowing students for becoming more active in their learning process.
- To modify the proportion between general knowledge, skills and competences in the subject-oriented knowledge, to promote skills and competences.
- Where possible to substitute part of lectures with thematic discussions.
- More study courses should include case studies that also reflect social competences.
- To provide continuing education of academic staff aimed at developing students' and their own social competences.
- To organise additional courses for students, for example, on time management, financial literacy, etc.
- More attention should be paid to the process of first year students' adaptation to their course requirements to strengthen students' learning and socialization skills in the academic environment.

National level:

- Study programme directors should be more involved in bringing together the content of studies and promoting interpersonal communication between teachers.
- To develop HEI cooperation in the implementation of study courses, which would allow for sharing resources and combining expertise.
- To reduce the group size in practical classes and lectures to facilitate exchanging views and the interactivity of content acquisition.
- To incorporate the necessity of developing social competences into the normative regulation of Latvia in order to be able to state their legal place in the study programme, rather than seek additional opportunities and resources for their implementation.

UNIVERSITY OF OSTRAVA, FACULTY OF FINE ARTS, HR MODUL CZECH REPUBLIC



**UNIVERSITY
OF OSTRAVA**
FACULTY OF FINE ARTS

The Faculty of Fine Arts offers an HR module, focused on the development of some social competences. The module is run for two semesters and consists of four information-practical courses (Organizational Culture; Personnel Processes Related to Organization Strategy and Management; Trends in HR Development, Creativity and Self Presentation and an HR internship of 100 regular hours offered by employers in the Moravian-Silesian Region), as well as a final presentation simulating a job interview or a business plan. The HR module is offered to all university students, not just to the students of the Faculty of Fine Arts. The HR module is offered to the students of bachelor, master, doctoral, full-time and combined programmes. This kind of networking is beneficial in terms of exchanging and sharing different experiences. What seems to be an example of a good practice is the fact that

selected blocks will be conducted by employers. The internships will be completed individually from mid-summer throughout the winter semester based on the selection of employers. Student presentations will take place before a committee made up of teachers of OU, HR lecturers and HR specialists representing companies operating not only in the Moravian-Silesian Region. The HR module starts with Belbin test of team roles¹. The test demonstrates which roles students may be good at. The teams have to be composed of members with different abilities. Teams consist of three to four people. The team building process commences with the presentation of the members' skills and competences. Students offer their skills to other colleagues and try to set up a good team. This also develops self-presentation skills in students. Upon the completion of all the module components, a successful graduate will receive a professional extension certificate of "HR - HR Consultant". For the completion of individual courses (these courses are listed as selective at some faculties and students do not receive ECTS) a student receives a standard credit rating.

CONCLUSIONS

The teams must develop the start-up and to find right targeting for it which demands not only relevant knowledge and skills but also social competences - like team work, recognition, negotiations and cooperation with start-up social environment. Since teams must create ethical codex for start-ups they have to be familiar with ideas corporate social responsibility and business ethics. In general – involvement into the HR modules supports students social engagement and practical competences by transferring theoretical knowledge into practical activities including these which demand creation of good relations with other people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutional level:

- Developing strategical approach for using active teaching methods.
- Implementing competence-based education vision.
- Connecting theoretical knowledge with its practical application more closely.



National level:

- Quality assurance system focusing more on practical aspects of T&L process;
- Opening debate on needs and ways of social competences development by HEIs;
- Opening debate on development of active T&L methods including simulation method.

European Higher Education Area (EHEA) level:

- Opening debate on needs and ways of social competences development by HEIs also by dissemination of best practices.
- Opening European programs/projects supporting the process of developing social competences in HE
- Strengthening the role of social competences developments in the Bologna Process.

¹ <https://www.belbin.com/about/belbin-team-roles/>

PWSZ IN ELBLĄG, POLAND



PWSZ
w ELBLĄGU

The State University of Applied Sciences (PWSZ) in Elbląg is a young higher education institution established in 1998. Currently the PWSZ in Elbląg provides education to almost 3000 students in eleven fields of 1st and 2nd cycle studies offered by the Institutes of Applied Informatics, Technology, Pedagogy and Languages, Economics. Theoretical knowledge acquired by the students at the university is complemented by the skills referring to its application during student placements offered by the best companies in Elbląg.

Reasons for selecting PWSZ in Elbląg for research:

- A unique initiative to create a programme (module) and a unit (Centre) intentionally and explicitly devoted to the development of social competences. The programme is a compulsory element of vocation-oriented "regular" programmes.
- The module contains two main elements:
 - a reflection on various social competences within traditional courses (lectures, conversatories, seminars, and prosocial activities of students evaluated by tutors and offering ECTS credits.
- Building the "Social Competences Centre" (a contract between the HEI and central and local authorities of approximately €5 m) – to create space for various students' initiatives developed as part of the "Social Competences Module" (SCM) requiring suitable facilities. Giving floor for students' research groups, for prosocial activities addressed to the local environment (like children, disabled people etc.), other initiatives. The support of the HEI in raising funds for those activities was declared by the Rector and confirmed by students during the interviews.

Why did the PWSZ undertake the initiative?

- Defining the PWSZ mission of contributing to social and cultural development of the region by forming relevant competences in graduates. Well-established and good relations with the local social community.
The local authorities supporting the initiative (also financially - funding for the Centre).
- Dissatisfaction of the PWSZ staff with the previous approach to forming social competences as a side-effect of "regular courses".
- PQF requirements for social competences in curricula design.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutional level:

- For the PWSZ: successful continuation of the project. Eliminating weaknesses indicated in interviews, particularly, by students;
- For other HEIs: a reflection on how to purposefully shape social competences.

National level:

- For PKA – evaluating the methodology of forming students' social competences by HEIs – PQF descriptors as a benchmark requirement;
- For the Ministry – launching programmes supporting HEIs' efforts to develop effective methods of forming social competences; promoting the process by disseminating best practices;
- Similar recommendations apply to local governments for HEIs located in smaller towns, not functioning as academic centres.

European Higher Education Area (EHEA) level:

- To initiate a debate on the needs and possibly on the question which social competences can be developed by HEIs
- To open European programs/projects supporting the process
- To promote social competences by means of disseminating best practices;

UNIVERSITY OF COLOGNE, FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES, GERMANY

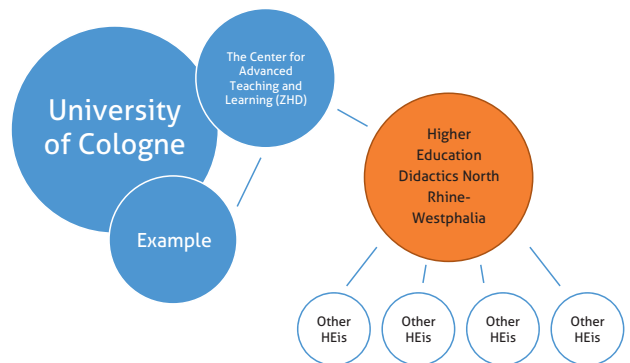


Higher education traditionally emphasizes knowledge and skills. In the last few years, however a shift from teaching to learning is notable, as well as competence orientation of courses. Besides teaching as a set of subject-specific matters, there is a need to teach students competencies and assist in discovering one's very own resources and competencies. Those competencies can help achieve general learning outcomes and self- and social competencies. In addition, communication skills, perspective-taking, empathetic understanding, self-regulation can promote self-efficacy and enable students to achieve (also self-set) goals on their own. Thus, the course "Resource-oriented through the thesis" with a small set of students was established by University of Cologne in cooperation with the Centre of Advanced Teaching and Learning (Faculty of Human Sciences) to shape such

competencies.

The course focuses mainly on the students' already existing resources, skills and competences (e.g. unrelated to the main subject) and (maybe) developing new ones in order to enable them to write their final thesis (resource-oriented approach). It covered three main aspects: (1) Working techniques (time-, project-, and self-management), (2) Relaxation techniques (meditation, autogenous training, yoga) and (3) Peer-support (collegial counselling, peer counselling). Evaluating methods based on four dimensions rating and answering open questions like "Which of your expectations were met?" or "Which aspects were helpful for you and why?" It is supplemented by "Reflective teams" – by three students after each session and an open discussion within the group towards the end of the course.

The findings indicate that students can benefit from the courses, enhancing the development of self- and social competences. Students experience self-efficacy and demonstrate the ability to transfer their existing competences to the new areas. Promoting self-development social skills and competences can help to deal with negative phenomena such as isolation or devastating competition. Those kinds of courses can provide a link between the learning process and self-assistance with regard to study-specific topics and challenges. It can also have an impact on an overall societal level, encouraging an appreciative and empathetic interactions with each other as a community.²



RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutional level:

- To incorporate self-development and social competences courses widely into the HEI programmes as elements of resource- and competence-oriented study programs.
- Support of engaged professors by the HEI's leadership.

National level:

- Reinforce the existing networks and support establishing networks between organizations striving for further development of higher education, as well as its didactics and methods. This includes national and international networking ambitions.
- Give value to social competences as a learning objective through making it a formal requirement demand at quality assurance level. This could mean an adequate role and position of a higher education institution and its faculties.
- Intensify research activities in the field of social competences development and its assessment through events and funding lines.

European Higher Education Area (EHEA) level:

- In addition, the strengthening of networks that support the exchange of professors and students in order to create room for social and cultural experiences is worth considering³.
- Support the awareness of the importance of social competences in both national and cross-national interaction contexts through its consideration in funding lines, policies and frameworks.

² The example was presented at the final DASCHE conference in Warsaw, February 2020. For further information, please contact the author Franziska Gnest: gnestf@uni-koeln.de

³ The recommendations are the responsibility of the author of the DASCHE Country Report Germany, available at the project website www.dasche.eu

LESSONS LEARNT

All or the most of the DASCHE project respondents as well as representatives of the associated partners stated that:

- Shaping social competences of graduates is one of the crucial goals of higher education;
- There is too less attention paid to what the social competences are and by mean of what didactic methods they are to be shaped;
- This situation should be changed starting with a debate on conceptualization of social competences on institutional and national levels; such debates were carried on in chosen countries only;
- Higher education institutions are getting too less support from legislation and from decision makers of different levels to implement effective process of designing and implementing the social competences into teaching and learning process;
- Only in chosen higher education institutions and countries the activities devoted directly and intentionally for shaping social competences were undertaken. More often it is understood as a side-effect of the teaching and learning process and left to the teachers' personal engagement;
- But teachers are not sufficiently prepared to integrate effectively social competences into study courses;
- Achievement of social competences is not well recognized and evaluated by quality assurance agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the project research a number of recommendations were formulated. Undoubtedly, in view of contemporary challenges originating from demographic, climate, technological, digitalization and many other problems, forming social competences should be a primary objective of higher education. In the times of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity), only uncertainty seems to be certain. To deal with the uncertain future the graduates need to be equipped by the whole education system and the teaching/learning process with social competences helping them to face these challenges.

MAIN RECOMMENDATION:

To create room to reflect on designing, developing and assessing social competences of students in higher education institutions (HEIs).

To run continuous debate among HEIs, HEIs Associations, Quality Assurance Agencies, Students' Associations, employers, NGOs, national and European policy makers about social competences in higher education.

SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS – INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

[Addressed to institutional decision makers and academic teachers]

- Since social competences are specific to institutional missions and national contexts and the needs of students; a one-size-for all approach is not beneficial and not recommended.
- Teachers need pedagogical support in order to effectively integrate social competences into courses of study; therefore, at institutional level, HEIs should ensure adequate resources dedicated to the development and teaching of social competences e.g.: funds, time, staff.
- The development of social competences in study programmes would be facilitated by the development of teaching guidelines for study programme designers or supervisors.
- HEIs should disseminate good practice from programmes and courses - sharing recommended methods of shaping social competences among academic teachers; providing programmes for developing teachers competences in the area.
- Study processes should be more closely connected with the professional practices of the field in order to strengthen the social competences that are needed for the labour market. This can be achieved through the organization of meaningful study internships, traineeships for teachers, involvement of industry professionals in the implementation of study courses, joint research projects leading to innovative practice.
- Courses of study need to be reconsidered with part of the structured study process being given over to social competences which are directly expressed in credit points. In addition, informal extracurricular activities or additional study activities could be integrated into the formal study programme and awarded credit points for participation. Offering ECTS for voluntary activities, for example involvement in running student organisations or community/charity or other volunteer work. (Loukola and Dakovic, 2017)

SELECTED RECOMMENDATION – NATIONAL LEVEL

[Addressed to decision makers such as government Ministries or Quality Assurance Agencies]

- Provide formal support for the inclusion of social competences into the official role and remit of higher education –if currently absent in policy documents. This needs at least the following:
 - A consideration of the conceptualization of social competences,
 - Establishment of a framework and guidance for developing social competences, and
 - Support for the development of social competences in practice by, opening research/innovation programmes focused on SC development, financial support to HEIs initiatives in the area, etc.
 - The national qualifications frameworks can be used to support the process including the development of social competencies through all levels of the education descriptors.
- Broader promotion of social competences, for example, running information campaigns about social competences. Open debate on the definition and development of social competences in higher education.
- Support for the education of teachers (in initial and further education) to promote the role of social competences in higher education.
- Supporting HEIs to recognize and validate social competences achievements as a form of prior learning. For example, preparing guides for HEIs, the creation of formal regulations supporting RPL. National guides outlining how to link non-formal and informal learning into formal programmes.
- Engaged Quality Assurance Agencies to promote the importance of social competences and methods of assessment. Social competences should be an element of the external evaluation of programmes but there is no reason to include prescriptive requirements regarding social competence education into programme accreditation standards or ESGs, because they are not defined at such a level of detail. Accreditation agencies might consider making social competence education part of their assessment of institutional missions and visions with regard to the quality of education in institutional audits.

- Rethinking the inclusion of conceptions of social competences into national qualifications frameworks
- More attention should be paid to the issue of social competences in continuing education activities and development of teachers, by facilitating the improvement of teacher's understanding of, and pedagogical competence in, the definition, implementation and evaluation of social competences.
- A conception of social competences that goes beyond immediate work-place skills and that includes constructive citizenship and social leadership as expected graduate attributes should be part of the national expectations of higher education, whether through legislation, national qualifications frameworks or other policy instruments (e.g. stimulating networking and peer learning among higher education institutions across Europe).

SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS - EUROPEAN LEVEL

[Addressed to institutions and organizations responsible for EHEA]

- The European Commission and the BFUG could assist member/EHEA countries to raise levels of awareness of the European frameworks and expectations with regard to social competences in their higher education sectors: providing information and funding (e.g. making social competences and higher education institutions' community engagement more prominent in Erasmus+).
- Emphasizing the importance of developing social competences in the documentation and activities of the Bologna Process and the new strategy for EHEA.
- Including recommendations in the documentation of European institutions of HE of the importance of developing social competences in the context of global, European and national challenges.
- Supporting QAA agencies in the assessment of social competences. Rethinking the ESG relating to quality assurance for EHEA with the aim of strengthening the validity of social competences in national quality assurance systems. There is no reason for putting requirements regarding social competences education into *programme* accreditation standards, because they are not defined in such a level of detail. Spreading good practices in this regard.
- Rethinking the Bologna Qualifications Framework and EQF to strengthen the importance of social competences formation in the education process.
- Opening more Eu research programmes / projects supporting the development, assessment, and validation of SC and providing information and guidance on the embedding of social competences in learning and teaching.
- Dissemination of more information relating to the inclusion of social competences in learning and teaching (RPL, EQF).
 - Creation of a system for exchanging good practices in designing, developing and assessing social competences in EHEA.
 - Opening more programmes / projects supporting the development, assessment, and validation of social competences.
 - Creation of a European platform for the exchange of experiences regarding SC formation in HEIs.
 - Support European policy-makers' and institutional networks focusing on social competences.

NEXT STEPS?

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