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Teaching Strategies in Higher Education: The Role of Innovation : Proceedings of the Second Regional Workshop .-edited by Reuben Fowkes

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Foreword

In May 1997 the *Civic Education Project Hungary* organised a workshop in Szeged whose purpose was to gather reform-minded educators to exchange both theoretical and practical ideas about higher education teaching strategies in the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The success of this initial gathering led to a second workshop, held in March 1998, some papers from which are collected in this volume. A third workshop is planned for the spring of 1999, and it is the hope of the organisers that the Szeged workshop will turn into a regular annual event.

The initial inspiration for the workshops was the state of play in the classroom throughout much of the region, based as it is on a top-down model of education in which the lecturer imparts knowledge and the student is there to absorb it passively. An explicit aim of the first workshop was thus to provide practical ideas for educators on how to encourage a more participatory form of learning in which students go beyond their traditional passive listening role, and this continues to be an important guiding principle. However, as the papers gathered in this volume indicate, that initial idea has been modified and developed in two important respects between the first and second workshops. Firstly, there is now a clearer insistence on placing the purely pedagogical questions in a broader context - the implications of changing teaching methods for educational institutions and for society, and the variety and complexity of the factors encouraging and inhibiting change. Secondly, the 1998 workshop was able to develop the idea of active learning further in its own practice, in the sense that the junior lecturers from the region, who are the fulcrum of the process of change, played a more active role: as well as absorbing the advice of experts in the field, they had greater opportunities to talk to each other and from their own experience about the situation they face and their responses to it, a fact which is faithfully reflected in the composition of the workshop proceedings.

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Perhaps this is what gives both the Szeged workshop and the collection of papers arising from it their unique value: not so much the "scientific quality" of the output (though this is by no means lacking), but the fact that they give young lecturers from the region a forum in which they can discuss their practical experience of higher educational reform and thus also learn from each other's ideas, achievements, and mistakes. Given the often extremely difficult conditions facing those working in higher education in the region today, when overwork and underpayment could easily produce an attitude of "teach and be damned", what emerges is an impressive testament to the vision, energy, and dedication of those who are the future of the profession.

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Introduction

The essays in this collection are expanded versions of papers presented at the *Second Regional Workshop on Teaching Strategies in Higher Education.* This book, like the Workshop itself, reflects the organisers' intention to provide a platform for discourses produced in the region by those working towards the reform of higher education. In my capacity as Editor, I would like to thank those who submitted a paper for their efforts and express my regret at not having been able to include all the contributions received. Hopefully, the papers outlined below represent a record both of the practical achievements and of the dynamic and friendly spirit of the 1998 Szeged Workshop.

TOMOR PLANGARICA, ABDULLA BALLHYSA and EDMOND RAPTI examine the role of new teaching and learning strategies in the reform of higher education in Albania. They make a link between university reform and social and cultural change in the wake of the fall of Communism. They argue that teaching strategies which encourage critical thinking can help reverse the many negative effects of dictatorship on individual psychology and contribute to the building up of a post-communist Albanian national identity within the framework of European integration. LIDIA LEVENETS points to changes in university curricula in Ukraine that reflect developments in the social and economic environment since 1989/90. She argues that changes in course content also imply changes in teaching methods. She presents her course of Communication Training designed to develop the 'people skills' of business undergraduates to prepare them for success in the global marketplace.

VLADISLAV VELICHO and SIARHEI SALEI argue in favour of the use of active learning methods to improve communication skills and make human relations 'more mobile, open and active'. They make an implicit link between political passivity in the face of dictatorship and student passivity in the traditional classroom environment. They also outline some recent attempts to create an 'informal sphere of education' independent of the formal higher education system in Belarus.

SUSAN PEARCE weighs up the future prospects of Gender Studies in the region. She uses the case of Gender Studies to examine the difficulties to be overcome in furthering interdisciplinary approaches within traditionally organised faculties. She also provides some practical advice to lecturers who plan to raise gender issues in Central and East European classrooms, based on her experience as a CEP Visiting Lecturer in Poland**.** NORTAUTAS STATKUS examines the legacy of Sovietism on Lithuanian historiography and presents the achievements of the *Faculty of History* at *Vilnius University* in reforming the curriculum to make courses more flexible and interdisciplinary as part of the University's preparations for integration with the *European Union* higher education area through the Tempus programme. IVETA SILOVA examines the process of opening and democratising the formerly rigid and ideologically-controlled education system in Latvia. She stresses the role of teachers in preparing students for life in a democratic country and summarises the findings of a recent 'needs assessment study' carried out by the *Soros-Foundation Latvia* and *Colombia University* into the content and process of Latvian teacher education development.

The next three papers consider the value of various innovative teaching methods in a Central and East European context. LUMME ERILT discusses how course evaluations by students can help to make teaching more student-centred and links university reform with the process of democratisation in Estonia. KRYSTYNA DZIEWANSKA gives an account of her recent experience in introducing a more active approach to English teaching in the *Department of Librarianship and Information Science* at the *Jagiellonian University* in Poland. MARY BETH DAVIS, CEP Visiting Lecturer and Academic Writing Instructor at the *Central European University* in Hungary, argues for the use of the 'research notebook' as a means to heighten critical thinking skills, both to improve educational outcomes and to create a more active citizenry.

The next two papers are case studies of higher education reform from outside the Region, and therefore a good source of inter-regional comparison. DAVID JAQUES, keynote speaker at this year's Szeged Workshop, outlines some recent developments in British higher education, seeing innovation as partly a grassroots movement to improve teaching, and partly a response to external pressure. IVAR NORDMO gives an account of the *University of Bergen*'s successful experiment in 'collaborative learning in work groups' to cope with the drastic increase in student numbers in Norway.

The following two contributions are from lecturers at the *University of Constantine* the Philosopher in Slovakia and both stress the importance of international links. SONIA CERETKOVA and MARIA KMETOVA attack the rigidity of the Slovak education system and argue for greater student mobility through 'close cooperation and synergy between Slovak and European Union universities'. VIERA KURINCOVÁ presents the multiple benefits of international exchange visits, sharing her experience of organising exchanges between the universities in Nitra, Slovakia and Leuven, Belgium.

Finally, RAFAEL WESTON argues in favour of the virtual university as a solution to some of the problems of higher education at the turn of the century, and warns that academics and universities ignore the global information highway at their peril.
As a whole, the papers presented at the Szeged Workshop and included in this collection of essays point to the intimate connection between the introduction of changes to teaching and

learning in Central and East European universities and general reform of higher education in the wake of the fall of Communism. Using innovative teaching strategies can therefore be seen as both a tool to bring about educational reform and as a reflection of the achievements of the reform process. Success in changing the way that knowledge is imparted to students in practice is seen to depend to a large extent on the course of democratisation and reform in the university as a whole. Equally, attempts by lecturers and teachers to find alternatives to the established pedagogical traditions of universities in the region are shown to play an important role in bringing about systematic change.

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Special "Thank you"

We would like to extend a special thank you
to the sponsors and individuals who have worked hard to make this workshop possible.
Without the financial support of our principle sponsors this event could never take place.

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Finally, special thanks should be addressed to the CEP lecturers who worked very hard on certain details of the workshop.

On behalf of the Organising Committee
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New Teaching and Learning Strategies in the Process of Reforming Higher Education in Albania

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ABSTRACT This paper presents some of the new teaching and learning strategies being put into practice in the Albanian system of higher education. These include innovations in the delivery of lectures, group research and the organisation of seminars. It also demonstrates some of the methods which are being used to directly promote the development of critical thinking. These are the INSERT system, developing techniques of questioning and clustering. Pedagogical innovations are examined in the context of overall university reform and linked with the process of social change in post-communist Albania.

Introduction

The implementation of new teaching and learning strategies in higher education is a characteristic of intellectual and scientific emancipation and demonstrates real tendencies towards contemporary achievements. It shows the continuous demand towards the assimilation of functional pedagogical methodologies over the giving and interpreting of knowledge in

different fields of science. The implementation of these strategies is not a separate and spontaneous act, it does not express only a desire or a certain tendency, but it comes out as a necessity in the process of the complete reform of higher institutions and universities in post-communist countries like Albania. That is why the problematic of the implementation of these strategies can be seen as closely connected with the reform of the educational system, and the latter as conditioned by the reform of society and its goals towards change and development. It is our aim to achieve, present and conceive these changes as both a general system of values and as genuine innovations in the educational system of Albania.

The Aims of Educational Reform in Albania

The educational system aims to achieve a new framework not only in its organisational, structural and institutional aspects, but also to improve its content and values and to enable accreditation with and emulation of analogous institutions in Western Europe. New teach-ing and learning strategies will serve as a new concept for man and a new vision for society.

Being a component part of a society which is in the process of changing, through the implementation of new strategies, higher education will gradually exert an influence to avoid a lot of the defects and shortcomings inherited from the communist period.

These include the considerable harm caused by the isolating paranoia of the dictatorship, an isolation which also affected contemporary scientific knowledge. Another shortcoming that will be gradually avoided is the status of the submissive and passive individual (pupil, student, intellectual) that was imposed by the dictatorship through the cultivation of the idea of endless difficulties in life (instead of cultivating the capability to face and overcome difficulties). Within those limitations the child had no possibility to live his childhood, the youngster to enjoy his youth, and the man to live his real life. Another negative feature that educational reform in Albania seeks to avoid is incompetence and the tendency to cultivate a kind of collective egocentricity, which resulted in deceit. These defects were partly a reflection of the fact that the teaching and learning process within the framework of the period did not meet the elaborate demands of and necessity for functional methodologies and effective educational strategies.

Criteria for Change

In the present stage of evaluating the changes and reform of our education system, especially that of the university, intellectual, academic and professional opinion is gradually getting to know and assess ideas, aiming to create some possibilities for evaluation and change. In this process a lot of contemporary scientific concepts are already being used, published, presented and suggested in our scientific thinking.

The evaluation and the changes should take into consideration the following factors: the characteristics of the global economic environment; the type of society to be formed; the adaptability of education towards the acquired culture and tradition in its positive elements; the needs of the working market for specialist relations between general and special objectives; the type of diploma acquired; the use of modern techniques of teaching and group learning work; the relations between school and community; the contribution of other institutions supporting education; the affinity between theoretical and applied teaching; the differen-tiation of curricula

according to the types of diploma acquired; the formative value of information included in programs; the organisation of the programs in harmony with the scientific logic of each discipline scheduling the changes in curricula; the facility of use and the manifold and modelling value of various means of visual and aural communication; modular teaching, programmed learning and distance learning; and the enabling of graduates to take an active part in the formation of a culture and national identity.

Obstacles and Tasks of Reform

This complex of criteria is being elaborated continually, to form and evaluate more effectively the system we are aiming to build up. However, in scientific, academic and professional surroundings, this reform process is facing a lot of difficulties. These include the existence of a kind of conservatism and traditionalism in the way of conceptualising the steps that should be undertaken and the fact that there are not equal rhythms in absorbing, supporting and applying new theories and models. There are also difficulties in elaborating and presenting contemporary knowledge, especially methodologies, and applying them in an Albanian context. There is a great lack of technical laboratories and teaching materials and backwardness in the techniques of using information and communication, especially regarding the level of computerisation in higher education.

However, this reform stage is considered to be a whole process, to which the following factors can contribute: re-evaluating tradition in those aspects that enable new develop-ments; the institutionalisation of debates and discussions; making intellectual opinion more rational; making use of Western experience; and co-operation with analogue Western institutions. The tasks also include the compiling of new curricula and the development of the scientific, academic and professional competence of managerial and teaching staff.

So, in this reform process a series of institutions, intellectual, academic and professional groups are taking part, but at the same time, our universities and higher institutions are working themselves to implement structural and institutional re-conceptualisation and for the direct aspects of content reform; i.e. to change and compile new curricula, and especially for the assimilation of functional methodologies and strategies in the teaching and learning process.

Strategies – the Advanced Lecture, Group Research and Scientific Seminars

In Albanian higher education a great number of strategies are present and coming into active use, especially those that are considered to be more functional for our situation, aims and objectives. Among the most striking strategies to be mentioned is the advanced lecture, which is used alongside the classical form of traditional lectures. The implemen-tation of the advanced lecture in the present phase was made possible by many factors: the increasing interest of the students in assimilating and taking in knowledge in an active way; the enrichment of information and the ways of getting this information; the use of a technical base during teaching; and the implementation through electronic media of various elements of distance learning.

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In the classical, traditional form of the lecture, the lecturer defines the object of the problem that will be dealt with and the audience listens or writes down the theoretical line of the point under discussion. This strategy presents some positive and negative points at the same time.

The advantages of listening to the created problem, the theoretical discussion of the lecturer, the moments of interruption to ask for further explanations over the topic presented in the auditorium, all these are some of the advantages of the classical form of lecture. But, on the other hand, there exists an element of passivity on the part of the student in the lecture; there is a lack of attention during the lecture and there is little opportunity to motivate the student. All these make up some of the disadvantages of the traditional form of lecture. That is why, gradually, the advanced lecture is being introduced and implemented, in the centre of which stand preparation, discussion and debate.

The preparatory work done while using this strategy consists in defining the topic of the problem, its problematic, recommending reference books that will be consulted and the use of didactic means. This preparatory phase enables the student to play an active role of in the auditorium and the lecturer to play the role of leader in developing discussion and debate. The discussion of problems by the students, the explanations, the theoretical argumentation of the problem, the outstanding creative individuality of each student, are some the most striking characteristics of this strategy. The encouragement of critical thinking, evaluation of the problem by various students, brainstorming and pair and group work are some of the techniques that could be included while using this strategy.

Group research is another teaching strategy which, in the present stage, is being greatly used in our higher education. This strategy may be mostly applied in laboratory sessions. The procedure of this strategy includes the determining of the thematic, the study of the necessary theoretical knowledge, the practical application of theoretical knowledge and its direct application in exercises or laboratory research sessions. This strategy may be applied in group work, where each member of a group contributes to the process of research work in the laboratory or in the solution of various problems. The functioning of optional parameters of task consciousness and the responsibilities each member has while working in the group make success possible while applying this strategy.

Scientific seminars can be considered as another functional strategy for teaching and learning. The organisation of this strategy in different subjects and in accomplishing different research work passes through several stages. Firstly, the theme is determined for each group of students according to the problem it will discuss. Secondly, each group determines the methodology it will follow for the solution of the problem. The reporting of the work done from each group in separate sessions of the seminar and the discussion of the work done are some of the elements that give a new dimension to the application of this strategy. Discussions with members of other groups, asking a lot of questions, the raising of a lot of hypotheses and the discussion of the acquired conclusions create the possibility of redefining the work of the group that is performing research work.

Critical Thinking – the INSERT System, Questioning Techniques and Clustering

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Higher education is, to a greater and greater extent, aiming to implement strategies that serve directly to promote critical thinking during the reading and writing process. One of these is the three phase structure. This model can be used not only in the teaching process but in the learning process as well. There exist a great number of strategies that can be used successfully in each of the stages of the structure mentioned above. These include individual, pair and group brainstorming and reading while using the INSERT system, which helps the students to analyse information in an accurate manner. So, the three phase structure secures a way of thinking which encourages creative and critical analysis and increases power of judgement and reflection. Questioning techniques and evaluation are being re-conceptualised as a strategy to serve the teaching and learning process, not only to check the level of assimilation of knowledge, but also to encourage creative and critical thinking while assimilating knowledge. More and more, the variety of questions is being enlarged, asking not only for the reproduction of stock answers, but also for their evaluation, synthetic analysis and interpretation. Through different types of questions, the aim is to make known to the students both what type of information is considered to be more valuable and what kind of thinking needs less attention. On the other hand, through the elaboration of questions of a different nature, the students are invited to reflect, to think, to reconstruct, to imagine and to create. In this way, they are gradually enabled to evaluate the status of the knowledge thereby acquired in the system of their thinking and judgement.

Clustering is another strategy that is being used in higher education, aiming through it to encourage students to think freely and openly about certain issues. The application of this strategy encourages the development of a linear form of thinking and allows the pedagogues to follow the logic and argumentation of the students during the learning process. When applied, especially in certain stages of transmitting knowledge in the auditorium (in the stages of evocation and reflection, for example) interesting syntheses can be reached in the acquisition and elaboration of knowledge, and in the acknowledge-ment of the thinking, judgement and opinions of the students.

Conclusion

The implementation of the above strategies is not a single act, but rather a process. Being as such, it should involve not only the enabling of university academic staff to apply these strategies, but also widening the horizons of their application. Implementation of new teaching and learning strategies can be profitably supported by other strategies too, such as discussion of ideas, the two and three-part diary and graphical organisers. This process, which has started to work, marks a new phase in teaching and learning in our institutions of higher education. This constitutes one of the innovations of the present epoch, one of the remarkable characteristics of the actual development of Albanian scientific and pedagogical thinking.

Student-Centred Techniques in Teaching Interpersonal Skills

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Abstract

The Ukrainian system of education is undergoing change. The content of many courses is changing, new ones are being introduced into the University curriculum. It calls for new techniques to teach students new skills which they will need in the world of work. The working environment is also changing and it means that the student's future employers will demand from them not only technical, but also social skills. When at University, these skills can be trained through case studies, group-exercises, role-plays and work simulations. To teach and train skills in work-like situations it is advisable for the teacher to actively involve students in the process of learning, making it more student rather than teacher-centred.

Introduction

Changes in the national economy of Ukraine could not but cause changes in the education and training of specialists for different spheres of business activity, and have brought about new approaches to training. Not only has the content of many subjects changed, but also new ones have been introduced which are not traditional for our system of education. Nowadays, the preparation of students for business careers consists of not only exposing them to the basics of economics, accounting, finance and marketing, but to human behaviour as well.

In Ukraine, we are now facing the break-up of the old economic, psychological and political stereotypes. In this continuous round of events, it has turned out that there is a shortage of ideas, knowledge and common sense. People badly need the ability to get along with each other in everyday business contacts. The society needs people able to express their ideas, take initiative, motivate other people and command their enthusiasm, take risks and lead others. John D. Rockefeller used to say that the ability to communicate with people is a commodity which can be bought for money like sugar or coffee, and he was ready to pay for this ability more than for any other commodity in the world.

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As the ties between countries broaden, more investors arrive in Ukraine, and more joint ventures open, more and more people in the sphere of education and students as well have begun to realize that future employers will demand specialists with new values and skills. You may now also hear recruiters and managers of different levels complain that today's graduates are technically solid, but the majority of them lack the interpersonal and social skills necessary to manage people, which often causes communication problems. It has become obvious that University curricula in Ukraine should include a special course to develop the "people skills" of its undergraduates, because these skills seem to be too important to be left to on-the-job learning. At Donetsk State Technical University this task is covered by the course of Communication Training, which was introduced at the International Business Department of the Faculty of Economics and Management in the framework of a joint project with Utrecht Higher School of Economics and Management (the Netherlands).

Content of the course

The basic characteristic of this course is learning by practicing. A small amount of theory is given by the teacher in short lectures or question-and-answer sessions. Relevant attitudes are shaped by questions for self-assessment. Most of the students' activities are video-taped for further discussion. The discussion is focused on four main questions:

1. What was the student goal?
2. What was done to obtain this goal?
3. What was the effect on the goal and on others?
4. What are alternatives for improvement?

The results are assessed on the basis of a written course report in which a student summarises:

1. observations of his own behaviour and that of others,
2. the effects of his behaviour on his goals and on others,
3. what has been learnt.

This is a report about a student, his personal experiences with and conclusions from the themes of the course.

Training model

How do we teach skills?

Our traditional courses have always focused on technical knowledge and neglected communication skills. Only the reforms in society and in the work environment have aroused concern for interpersonal skills. When starting the course, I realized that the old, sometimes boring techniques, from the time when the lecture was the main means of communicating information and students its passive receivers, were unlikely to help here. Students can hardly develop communication skills by only listening to the lecturer. But it is not necessary to avoid completely such a traditional form as the lecture. We know it also has its uses.

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I tried to make the traditional lecture form student- not teacher-oriented. A self-assessment exercise, usually given before the basics of the skill in question, and discussion of students' scores help avoid the teacher's monologue. The lecture acquires the form of a dialogue with the students, which makes it student-centred. This, in its turn, is defined by the essence of the course, which is behaviour-oriented.

As a part of a comprehensive system for learning skills, the lecture is effective for increasing the learner's awareness and understanding of underlying concepts. By definition a skill is "the ability to demonstrate a system and sequence of behaviour that is functionally related to attaining a performance goal".[1] A single action cannot continue a skill that is a system of behaviour which can be applied in different situations.
To become competent in any skill, students need to understand it both conceptually and behaviourally; to have the opportunity to practice it and receive feedback on how s/he performs the skill, so that it can become an integral part of his/her behaviour. We try to provide this opportunity at Communication Training classes.

Our course focuses on the following transferable skills which are highly valued in a business environment: listening; goal setting; giving and receiving feedback; oral persuasion; appraising performance; motivating and leading people; decision-making; running a group meeting; conflict management; team management; negotiating; interviewing techniques; and job application skills. Skills are practised through self-assessment exercises, case studies, role-plays, modelling and group exercises, work simulations, feedback on video recording and discussions.

To learn and practice skills we adhere to the model suggested by S. P. Robbins:
1. Self-Assessment Exercise
2. Skill Concepts
3. Concept Quiz
4. Behavioural Checklist
5. Modelling Exercise
6. Group Exercises
7. Summary Checklist
8. Reinforcement Exercises

We suggest *self-assessment exercises*, which are followed by an interpretation to find out how much the student already knows about the skill in question. Not knowing the theoretical concepts of the skill, students try to intuitively evaluate the skill. The mistakes they make give ground for discussion, during which they construct the definition of the skill themselves.

Then follows *skill concept*, i.e. learning the basic concepts underlying the skill. This is achieved through a short lecture and by reviewing the material available on the skill. Unfortunately, nowadays both teachers and students at our school suffer from a shortage of appropriate materials.

The *concept quiz* is intended to get feedback and see whether the basic concepts of the skill are understood by the students.

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The *behavioural checklist* is compiled on the basis of the skill concepts and represents the most important behaviour related to the skill being practised. It is also used by other students to evaluate how well the person has learned the behaviour in question.
A *modelling exercise* is done in front of the class and students have the opportunity to observe each other performing specific skill behaviours and learn from this observation.

In the next step *(group exercises)* students form small groups and practice the skill they have acquired. Those who do not play observe and evaluate the 'actors' performance using a special rating sheet. Then the roles are changed so that everyone can be both a participant and an observer. It is useful as groups certainly treat one and the same situation differently and these different approaches often bring about rather heated discussions on whose ways are more effective and why. These exercises give the opportunity to combine watching, thinking and doing.

After the exercise is completed, the class discusses the participants' performance. And here we are faced with a certain difficulty. It has not been traditional for our higher schools to teach students to work in teams and ask them to evaluate their group mates performance. Self and peer assessment turned out to be a stumbling stone for my students. They are still guided by their old biases. Many of them are not willing to comment on the behaviour of others, as they are afraid to create offensive reaction. In addition to training communication skills, another concern arose, to develop their ability to assess and evaluate their own work in ways which are applicable to their future profession.[2]

But, gradually they mange to overcome this hurdle and get to understand how important the skills of giving and receiving feedback and self and peer assessment are. They start to judge more realistically their own behaviour and that of the others. Their observation and analyses become deeper, more detailed. I have noticed that it makes them more co-operative, involved and motivated and teaches them how to get along with each other. Those students who combine work and study and are confronted with certain communi-cation problems at work suggest new topics for discussion. Students put more effort into doing the work better to get higher marks from their peers.

What makes this approach different from the traditional one is the fact that the course is student-centred. Students learn by analysing and evaluating their own performance and that of their group mates. It helps develop communication between an individual and the group, as it is impossible to estimate your own behaviour without comparing it with the performance of other participants. Students are also given relevant case studies illustrating concepts discussed. Responding to them, learners understand how varied and complex workplace issues can be.

Some students combine work and study and they have the opportunity to try to practice skills at work. Keeping in mind what they already know about communication skills, they analyse and assess their own behaviour in the office and that of their managers and colleagues and discuss it in class. To my mind, for the rest of the class it is good evidence of the importance of interpersonal skills. Having learnt the concept of skills, students often recall their past experience and analyse what and why they went wrong and draw conclusions for the future.

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Reflecting on their own performance and taking into account how the others evaluated their behaviour, students complete a *summary checklist* identifying in which types of behaviour, to their mind, they need improvement.

Finally the learners are given *reinforcement exercises*, the aim of which are to transfer learning in the class to real-life situations and reinforce the techniques they have learnt. Most of the students‘ activities are videotaped for further discussion. It helps identify in which type of behaviour the student is deficient in and needs further practice.

Students are very interested in the course; they like that they do most of the talking during the lesson, not the teacher. Students find the course helpful because it, as they point out themselves, not only improves their own communication skills, but also helps understand the behaviour of others better.

Student’s analysis of his/her own behaviour and that of others, learning through this analysis and self-assessment, is realized not only during the course, but also when checking how the skills were mastered. At the end of the course students are required to write a report. In this report they do not have to simply state what they know about the subject matter, as it has always been done in the traditional report. In their reports students must adequately apply the course’s subject matter by analysing their own learning process, summarising observations of their own behaviour and that of others, the effects of their behaviour on their goals and on others and draw conclusions about their future behaviour.

Conclusion

Practising skills in group exercises, playing the role of managers at different levels and employees negotiating, motivating, disciplining, running meetings, making decision and trying to settle conflicts students learn about types of behaviour at work (by experiencing them). It also helps them to develop the ability to compare different views, their merits and demerits, and choose those which work effectively. They certainly do not develop skills in training exercises; they will be doing it afterwards, at work, and over a long period of time. And we do not expect them to win in all the arguments and negotiations early in their careers. But, practising skills in exercises helps them develop the ability to work with, understand and motivate other people both individually and in groups. The effect is to make these groups operative in achieving goals and it will make it easier for them to adapt to a changing world.

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Active Methods in Different Spheres of Education in Belarus

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ABSTRACT Active learning versus traditional education? This question, constantly being asked in different educational institutions all over the world, has practically not been raised in Belarus. The system of higher education is extremely conservative in this country, and it

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is really difficult to change it from within. This paper will comment on the necessity of using active methods in the educational process in Belarus and other countries with similar situations. A positive experience of how it is possible to oppose the traditional system of education will be introduced as well.

Introduction

There are different points of view regarding the current system of education in Belarus. The only idea that unites them is a consensus that at this time education is in the process of looking for new curricula, new aims and objectives, and, evidently, new ways to achieve them. A base for a new curriculum in education can be found in the area of social needs. Ideally, the aim of education is not only to acquire new knowledge or information for its subsequent reproduction, but to stimulate self-development and self-realization, which will then be applied to appropriate situations in real life. In addition, new goals in education are to heighten personal experience through reflection and to exchange different experiences with others through the process of human interaction. The effectiveness of interaction is enhanced by using a great variety of active learning methods.

Learning cycle

The mechanism of using active methods in a learning process may be abstractly examined with the help of Figure 1, *Learning by experience,* a pattern derived from the work of the noted American scholar David Kolb.[1]

The *Learning by experience* cycle consists of four consecutive stages:

Stage 1. Having an experience
At this stage, the person experiences "something" in a concrete situation. Thus, active methods, such as simulations, role games, case-studies, etc., can be used in order to stimulate artificially a process of interaction which will, hopefully, cause a new social experience.

Stage 2. Reflecting on the experience
The purpose of this stage is to create the condition for critical observation of and reflection on the experience. Active methods, such as work in small groups, brainstorming, etc., are used at this stage to organize effective communication.

Stage 3. Learning from the experience
At this very stage, unique knowledge is being born as a result of critical reflection: the individual evaluates his/her own assessments. The use of active methods here (for example, group discussion) is oriented towards the self-development and self-realization of the person during the process of interaction: people begin to work together in one direction, trying to reach individual goals at the same time.
Stage 4. Planning the next steps
Having in mind the evaluation of the previous stage, the individual plans his/her next activities which take place, as a rule, in reality and, generally, leads to a new experience which starts a new learning cycle.

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Figure 1.
Learning by experience

STAGE 1
Having an experience
ACTIVIST

STAGE 2
Reflecting on the experience
REFLECTOR

STAGE 3
Learning from the experience
THEORIST

STAGE 4
Planning the next steps
PRAGMATIST

The use of active methods provides an opportunity to break psychological difficulties and complexes which impede effective communication, such as the learner as a passive object rather then an active subject, the lack of mutuality between the teacher and the student, etc. The great variety of different active methods, such as energizers, icebreakers, etc., are used in order to create a favorable atmosphere which can assist in giving birth to a new commonly reached knowledge. Everybody can use this co-created knowledge for self-development and self-realization.

The use of active methods in different spheres of education is not only a way of organizing effective communication, but also a possible new system of coordination for human relations, where all the elements are much more mobile, open, and active.

Active methods in Belarus

The main aim of teaching methods in formal education in Belarus and many other countries of the region is traditional – to give the learner a system of knowledge in a certain subject. However, this is not enough for the development of a well-balanced human being. To fill this lack, active learning methods were invented, as they allow the learner to achieve simultaneously knowledge, skills, and values, that is, the state in which a person understands the reasons for his actions and gains abilities to use the knowledge acquired. (Figure 2).

Figure 2.

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Knowledge (*What?*)

Active methods Skills (*How?*)

Values (*Why?*)

Active methods were primarily created to change the traditional passive environment in secondary and higher education, but they are still mostly unused in these spheres in Belarus. The main cause of this situation is that school and university teachers are generally conservative, and there is practically no hope that they will change soon. There are a few young teachers and scholars who try to introduce new teaching methods; however, their achievements are not shared with a wider audience, since formal education is not ready to use active methods in the classroom.

In this situation, the impulse to involve active methods in the learning process proceeds from informal spheres of education.

Organizations and institutions of informal education were mostly established during the last 5–7 years, so they are much more mobile and creative than formal educational structures. Thus, independently-minded young professionals choose to work in the informal alternative spheres of education, from which active methods gradually penetrate to those of formal education (Figure 3): young university teachers master the new techniques on an informal level and, later on, introduce these new methods on a formal level.

Figure 3.

Informal Alternative Education	*Active Methods*	Formal Higher Education

In the reminder of the article we would like to introduce and explain some of the programs that are being conducted by two independent Belarusian educational organizations, Youth Education Center *POST* and Grodna Association of Young Intellectuals *VIT*. The staff of these organizations (mostly young high school teachers) conduct various workshops, conferences, and training courses, using interactive methods in the educational process.

1. Civic education of young people

This program was launched in 1996 by the *POST* Center and *VIT* Association in order to make young people more active and responsible in civic life. An interactive training seminar (for 1 or 2 days) on "hot" youth and civil problems has been applied as the main method of the project. Interactive methods of teaching allowed a difference to occur in the mentality of the participants

of the seminar. More than 30 training programs were conducted within the framework of this project; almost 20 new youth initiatives have been started by the seminars' participants since then.

2. Basics of legal education
The *VIT* Association started this project in the spring of 1997 to give the basics of legal education to youth. Young teachers and students of law use a wide variety of interactive methods (case studies, simulations, role games) in order to fully engage participants in the activities during the training seminars.

3. Conflict management
The Conflict management project was launched by the *POST* Center in 1995 to introduce alternative means of conflict resolution and to teach youth how to apply them. The workshops are provided for a young audience, mostly for youth leaders. Within the framework of this project several mediation centres will be opened in Belarus in 1998-99.

4. The School of Young Journalists
This project was launched in April 1997 by the *Third sector* Information Resource Center, *VIT* Association, and by a number of independent newspapers. The aim of the project is to prepare young (15–25 years old) independently minded journalists. The classes are given both by professional journalists (professional skills training) and trainers in interactive methods (general issues). The first graduates of the school publish an independent school newspaper and contribute to the independent Belarusian media.

5. Part-time Youth University
The idea of a free part-time university in the humanities for those young people who, for different reasons, cannot receive it in regular universities emerged at the meeting of youth leaders in spring 1997. This idea was implemented in October 1997, when young university teachers, members of the *VIT* Association, delivered the first lectures in law and history. The Youth University meets three times a week for three hours from October to April. Almost forty students are involved in its activities this year. All classes are provided using interactive methods of teaching.

Perspectives

The *POST* Center and *VIT* Association work in close cooperation between themselves, as well as with other similar organisations, carrying out various common projects which initiated the creation of the Belarusian network of educational organisations. This could result in the creation of a formal educational institution of a new type, oriented to the usage of active methods. We hope that the joint efforts of these independent educational organisations will assist the fast introduction of interactive methods in various fields of education in Belarus.

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Gender Studies in Central and Eastern Europe: The Future of an Interdisciplinary Field

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ABSTRACT In recent years, the field of Gender Studies has begun to take root in Central and Eastern European universities. Accompanying this growth are new social movements that address gender issues, a new generation of students who have begun to question gender stereotypes, and interest by academics in western scholarship on gender relations. I will discuss selected aspects of this growing field in the context of interdisciplinary programs in the region. I will illustrate the trans-disciplinary nature of gender studies and argue that it is this trans-disciplinary nature that can signal either: 1) a strong future of gender studies in the region or 2) a crib death for the field.

Crossing Disciplines

I have selected a few examples that provide a glimpse at how gender studies interacts with multiple disciplines. First, the task of understanding the complexity of a gendered world is

necessarily an interdisciplinary one. Historians who examine the social texts of previous periods are able to illustrate the relativity of gender constructions: how they are products of a particular time and place. A recent example is the study by Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (1996), which examines how the early concepts of American national identity were bound up with who the American man was supposed to be. The idealized American "character" was a prescription for an ideal "manly" identity.

Further, strikingly parallel, examples can be found in early twentieth-century posters for European communist parties. Eric Weitz has compared the images selected by various national parties to portrayed the future of communism, where transforming selves was integral to transforming society.[1] Socialism was seen as creating a future new man and new woman in relatively new, non-traditionally gendered forms.

Other disciplines that are highly useful include anthropology, where cross-cultural research into the varieties of cultures allow us to see both similarities and differences between gender relations between cultures. Margaret Mead provided one of the first reflections on the relativity of gender expectations in her comparisons of groups where roles appeared to be the reverse of those in the west.[2] Although there are now questions about the validity of all of her examples, more recent anthropological work continues to feed our knowledge about the cultural, rather than natural, differences between the sexes, and to document how much cultural syncretism exists now, especially after colonial contact. The field of art history adds to our understanding of past gender roles by suggesting how representations of gender identity existed at one time, and participated in codifying certain assumptions within cultures.

The recent work of Deborah Tannen in the field of social psychology provides insights into the unconscious elements of communication differences between
boys and girls and between men and women.[3]

It goes without saying that comparative studies of religious beliefs and structures, as well as the representations within the mass media, are essential and fruitful areas of research for any student of gender relations. My own field, that of sociology, embraces so many subfields that any number of them are relevant to gender studies – from urban sociology, to sociology of the family, to the study of youth subcultures. In addition to suggesting that gender studies needs these various disciplines, I could go through this list to demonstrate how, reciprocally, each of these disciplines needs gender studies. Can we understand the power of public pilgrimages to the Black Madonna portrait in Czestochowa, Poland during communism, for example, without understanding the history of Polish Catholicism's veneration of Mary and the feminine principles that she represents for the society?

The Trans-disciplinary Promise

How possible is it that this trans-disciplinary character will help gender studies gain a foothold in the universities of the region? If such a character is emphasized as scholars begin to promote its development, the relevance of gender studies to various traditional disciplines might help it find multiple homes. This would be promising for the field because its existence would be rooted in integration rather

than marginalization. In the West, one of the central difficulties facing programs that address gender is their relegation to the margins of established disciplines. Debates over the need and place for special departments have become divisive in some places. Since there is no history of such disciplinary divisions in this region, there is a chance that scholars of gender studies might learn from the mistakes of the West and start fresh.

Despite the barriers discussed below, change is the name of the game in higher education in this region. There is the potential for the creation of new models, based upon the specific cultural characteristics of the country and university in question. If teaching and research on questions of gender are able to take root within established disciplines, the field(s) might begin to grow relatively quickly, rather than waiting for instructors to complete several-year programs of advanced study. Given the economic realities of most universities in the region, most scholars cannot afford such study. It is more likely to expect that graduates of such programs as the Master's degree in Gender Studies from Central European University would begin to teach within their respective disciplines, rather than beginning a new institute. This is not meant as an argument against establishing new institutes, but a recognition of the present situation, where funding for research support, especially within public universities, is insufficient to underwrite such major changes.

The Barriers

Just as its trans-disciplinary nature might give gender studies certain advantages, it also presents a number of barriers. One barrier is the flip side of the promise suggested above: it may be difficult for gender studies to find any type of "home" in a university unless it fits squarely within a traditional discipline. If scholars then do begin to establish the field outside of these disciplines, the risk is that it becomes relegated to its own sphere - analogous to the marginalized private sphere that women are expected to inhabit in many societies. In such a case, gender studies would not receive equal status, funding, or voice within the academy. This would mean that the potential for scholars in the field to have any potential effect on social policy would be less likely. The cause of regulating sexual harrassment in the university, for example, would be viewed as a voice from the outside.

Finally, there are general barriers that any interdisciplinary program in the region faces, due to the turbulence of institutional change. Some of these are logistical barriers, but they are rooted in customary cultures in institutions. For example, how can we broach cross-disciplinary communication between scholars, support collaborative research between fields, introduce team teaching, and open curricula for students to take more classes outside of their "home" faculties? How can those of us trained in a certain specialization come to recognize that we need the knowledge of other disciplines?

There are, of course, limits to understanding and accepting the work of another discipline – differences in epistemology and methodology. For example, sociologists are less likely to accept the results of experimental laboratory studies from the field of psychology than natura-listic studies such as those done by anthropologists. Some barriers are geographical and physical; at University of Gdansk in Poland, social science institutes are located several kilo-meters away from one another, and communication through computerization is only beginning.

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Possible Future or Crib Death?

It is, of course, impossible to predict which direction that gender studies will eventually head in the region. What is clear is the need for active promotion and negotiation; the field will not simply establish itself. In fact, many of those teaching in the region have experienced some reticence to the discussion of gender in the classroom. Below are suggestions for addressing such reticence.

Many ancillary factors may also be involved that make it difficult to predict the future of gender studies and cross-disciplinary work. For example, in the States, the hiring crisis in the universities has forced more cross-disciplinary teaching than was previously the case; whether such a situation will extend to this region is an open question. The sudden absence of official state censorship in Central and Eastern Europe has inspired some bold activism on behalf of domestic violence, for and against abortion rights, and against sex discrimina-tion in court decisions. One of the groups challenging such discrimination in Poland at the moment is divorced fathers, who are rarely granted primary custody by the courts.

Whether or not cross-disciplinary fields will become part of the standard structures of the university "business," it is important that those of us visiting from the West remember the long history of cross-disciplinary "thinking" in this region, where social criticism was embedded in the arts and literature, at the risk of life, imprisonment, or deportation. It is a world from which we can take lessons for our own discipline-bound institutions.

Appendix

GENDER ISSUES IN THE EAST-CENTRAL EUROPEAN CLASSROOM: STRATEGIES AND SUGGESTIONS

Recognizing Gender Issues in Teaching and Learning

Be aware of any gender differences in learning and discussion styles that are specific to the culture in which you are teaching. While female students tend to defer to males in classroom discussions in the States, this may not be true elsewhere. Other gender differences in learning styles may operate, however.

Try to vary the styles and topics so that there is a balance between those most interesting for each gender (e.g., more women than men may respond to discussions of gender and mass media; more men than women may respond to discussions of journalism and politics).

When teaching about gender directly, It is important to communicate that gender studies are not concerned only with women's lives. If the gender class opens with a text by a man about men's issues, this will help counter the assumption that the course emanates from women's "special interest" in their own problems; it can be argued equally that men are constrained and often harmed by traditional expectations. A simple examination of the higher suicide rates among men can reinforce this point.

Recognize that there may be no perfect solutions to problematic gender dynamics in the classroom. The dynamics transcend the classroom and are perpetuated in the many other arenas of students' lives. If you have decided to introduce cooperative rather than competitive learning in the classroom, be aware that some students may continue to prefer the competitive style.

Common Problems to Anticipate in Discussions about Gender in Central and Eastern Europe

The strong tendency for students (and others) to disassociate themselves fromthe category of 'feminism' because:

- like elsewhere, the category may be associated with radical separatists or manhaters
- there is suspicion of any "ism" that appears to be imposed from above
- the project of equalizing men and women is associated with imported – thus less culturally relevant – ideas from the west, or with the now defunct experiments in state socialism
- the issue is viewed as less critical than other issues that the post-communist societies now face
- women appear to be faring well compared with those in other parts of world.

Overcoming Barriers to Discussions of Gender

Allow the issue to be "self-introduced": gender questions often arise in discussions initiated about other subjects, or in analyzing a cultural "artifact" such as a film

Allow students to find the evidence based on their own research: e.g.: content analyses of mass media texts, personal interviews.

Give the students the opportunity to explain their own world to you; "what is the reality like for men and women in your culture? In your generation?"

Diffuse the emotional volatility by analyzing a culture other than their own.

Whatever the subject, it is necessary to find the "side door" to the students' minds before attempting to enter. This requires modeling and coaching rather than lectures, and a belief that understanding is a prerequisite to learning.

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Internationalisation & Modernisation of Studies at the Faculty of History of Vilnius University

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ABSTRACT This paper considers the progress of reform of history teaching at Vilnius University in post-Soviet Lithuania. It examines the process of internationalisation, in particular adaptation to the ECTS system, and its effect on teaching and learning methods. Institutional changes and curricula reform have made the History Faculty of Vilnius University a model of successful transformation in the post-Communist transition.

Introduction

It is self-evident that the historiographies of Western and East Central Europe have followed a path of divergent evolution. The impact of Communism has sharply demarcated the two traditions. Many institutions have been set up, or are in the process of transformation. This is a real existential problem in the whole of Eastern Europe, since it originates in the tension between

the adoption of Western models (and the possibility of their implemen-tation) and endeavours to construct original ones.

Two extreme positions are possible: either blind, uncreative copying of the western patterns, or the stubborn rejection of foreign experience and insistence on local creation. In the first case direct imitation often leads to speculations and institutions which tilt at windmills, in the second, the ethnocentric activities result in the reinvention of already known things.

Post-Soviet situation in Lithuanian historiography

During the period of the deconstruction of the Communist system, Soviet Marxist "historical materialism" was replaced by generic nationalistic historical narrative in Lithuania, though it adopted "objective" research methods and modes of thinking from Soviet historiography. It is brimming over with empiricism, petty issues and the negation of theoretical reflections. One could pose a question: how to embrace the contemporary ideas of western historiography? It is not easy to join the western academic discourse, where generic nationalistic historicism is a rather outdated paradigm, with such a background.

According to contemporary understanding (school of Bielefeld) , historical science consists of research, theory and didactics.[1] Theory and Didactics were and still are virtually absent from Lithuanian historiography. However, the correct formulation of research problems and actuality of the results is hardly comprehensible without theoretical reflection. Summing up, the minimum condition of scientific historiography – the critical analysis of sources and problematic historicism – should be met in order to have a fully functioning history as a historical science. These existential tensions have determined the strategy and tactics of reform at the Faculty of History, which are as follows:

1. Departmental reform and rejection of the Soviet historiographic past;
2. Strengthening the positions of historicism and the renovation of traditional historical disciplines;
3. Building of the theoretical foundations of history and attempting integration with other social sciences;
4. Integrating our studies into the European network of academic institutions of social sciences and the humanities.

Reforms of the Departments and Study Curriculum

We have inherited a significant gap between research and education from the Soviet period. Departments, programs and the study system as a whole were formed according to Muscovite standards (World History, History of the USSR, and Lithuanian History). Research was focused basically on Lithuanian history and researchers were not able to participate much in the teaching process. Therefore, the old departments had to be disbanded and new ones set up.

The reform of departmental reorganisation is finished now in the Faculty and was carried out thanks to the inexhaustible energy of the dean, Dr. A. Bumblauskas. New collectivities of

scientists who are united by common study subjects and methods have been formed: the Department of Modern History and the Department of Theory of History and History of Culture. Essentially, both these departments research Lithuanian history in the context of world history at the present moment, expanding the horizons and refining the methodology.

Also, the old Soviet mandatory study plans were replaced by a more democratic system where students are allowed to chose more than half of the courses themselves. New two-stage Bachelor and Master programmes were introduced. New Bachelor specialisations of Medieval History, Archaeology, Conservation and Restoration of Archaeological Findings, Modern and Contemporary History, and History and Anthropology of Culture were created. These specialisations are even more differentiated in Master programme into the History of Culture, Anthropology and Local Monographs, and Historics (Theory of History and Didactics).

Search for the Transcendence of Historicism

The methodology of Historicism has demonstrated its strong sides, especially in political history. However, advanced historical research has tried to overcome some of the shortcomings of Historicism, namely: ignorance of theory, the search for particularities but not regularities and commonalties in the historical process and between different regions. The need to research the theoretical, methodological, didactic and historiographic problems of the history of science inspired the dean, Dr. A. Bumblauskas, and the Council of the Faculty to establish a Department of Theory of History and History of Culture (similar to departments of History in Western institutions and having no analogues in Eastern-Central Europe).

The first research trend of the department is the displacement of passive historical narrative with the problematic Historicism, i.e. to turn from the history of unique events to the history of society, from Lithuanocentric history to the typology of Lithuanian history within a European context.

The second area of research and education is the Historiography of History. This direction is conceived as one of the ways of renovation of historical science, which is closely connected with the Didactics, Historics and Philosophy of History. The department aims to modernise historical studies, while applying new research and didactic methods. It is expected to prepare a new generation of historians who could be called "experts of historical consciousness"; who would not be oriented to the study of the past but be responsive to the current cultural and social needs of society and be able to contribute to the development of the common future.

The fourth trend is the formation of "Visual History". Over 50 historical television programmes have been made since 1994, designed to analyse historical stereotypes, myths and historiographic developments. Currently our department is launching a project "Visual Memory of Lithuania". The project plans include: the creation of a Lithuanian visual data base (in the form of CD-ROM) catalogued and made available on the Internet to experts, educational institutions and the public. There will be an attempt to access, record, collect and research Lithuanian heritage visual resources found in foreign depositories, such as: numismatics, sphragistics, historical cartography, art, and early literary accounts.

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ECTS Project

The ECTS project was one of several measures undertaken towards furthering the internationalisation of Vilnius University and Faculty of History in particular. ECTS, the *European Credit Transfer System* is a part of the ERASMUS program. It was developed by the Commission of the European Communities in order to provide common procedures to guarantee the academic recognition of studies abroad. It provides a way of measuring and comparing learning achievements, and transferring them from one institution to another. Basically, this is accomplished by introducing a common ECTS credit unit and grading scale.

The goal of this project was to create a credit transfer model at the Faculty of History of Vilnius University according to requirements, which would enable both foreign students to get credits in Lithuania and Lithuanian nationals to get credits for their studies abroad. The project was accomplished in co-operation with Aarchus (Denmark), Graz (Austria) and Helsinki (Finland) universities and sponsored by TEMPUS. While implementing the project, also, the study curriculum at the Faculty of History has been restructured and made compatible with West European University study requirements. The project resulted in the publishing of ECTS information package of our Faculty, where the reformed study curriculum was reflected.

Apparently, it would have been easy to achieve that if our credit system had not measured only students' workload in auditorium. According to ECTS, student workload includes lectures, seminars and independent work (written essays, literature reading, etc.). Students have to collect 60 credits per year and 30 per – semester. Our students before the reform used to "earn" only 40 credits per year. It appeared that we used to evaluate just academic hours spent by the students in a classroom listening to professors' "wisdom". Reading of literature and writing of papers were not measured, and, frequently, were not used by some lecturers as a form of evaluation of knowledge at all. Therefore, we had to introduce written essays and required literature lists as a standard part of the courses, and provide the measurement thereof. This led to important changes in the study curriculum.

The Reform

Subsequently, the credit measurement system was developed. The conception of a ECTS credit is based on an average input of approximately 40 work hours by a student per week. The study week equals 1.5 ECTS credits. Consequently, 1 academic work hour equals 0.0375 credits (1.5 credits are divided by 40 weekly work hours). Thus, the student receives only 1.2 credit just for sitting and listening to a 32 hours course. Other credits he/she has to gain writing essays and reading literature. One page of seminar essay requires approximately 2 work hours, therefore we equated 1 page to 0.08 credits. Accordingly, the student earns 0.16 credits for 1 page of research seminar essay, as 1 page of it requires 4 work hours. Also, student gets 1 credit for reading the 260 pages of required literature (approximately, 26 work hours).

The ETCS project made us aware that we should turn away from lectures as the main form of study and concentrate upon seminars and pro seminars. Since it is difficult to initiate new courses immediately, each department has introduced a collective obligatory research seminar

organised by several lecturers in the third and fourth years of studies and at the Master level. The themes of these seminars follow the main general research trends of the departments (e.g. "History between Humanities and Social Sciences" or "Sources and History of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, 17th–18th c."). The seminars focus on the independent formulation of scientific problems and the ways to research them. Students are required to write a research essay following the aims mentioned above.

It is envisaged that Bachelor and Master thesis should grow out of the scientific problems discussed in the seminars and developed in the written essays, but not depend solely on students' wishes or the supervisors' will, as it often happened previously. Other lecturers were also forced to think about the modes of teaching other than lectures. Since the time students could spend in an auditorium is also limited (25 h per week), the increase of lecturing hours is impossible, on the other hand, courses which earn just 1.2 (32 academic hours) or 2.4 (64 academic hours) credits are unattractive to the students.

Conclusions

Hence, the ECTS project, basically a bureaucratic procedure, has stimulated (rather unexpectedly) progressive innovations in history studies at our faculty. Other faculties of Vilnius University are expected to follow the same road, and, certainly this may involve changes in their structure. This also brought the awareness of the need to introduce courses taught in English (German and French) into the regular curriculum in order to promote the ECTS and the internationalisation of our Faculty and the University in general. It also brought structural reform of the study curriculum. The post-Soviet transition period is coming to the end, and it may be said that Faculty of History has emerged from it as an institution that is completely open and ready to integrate into the European and global academic community.

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ABSTRACT This article summarises the findings of the needs assessment study, carried out by the Soros Foundation – Latvia and the Institute of International Studies at Teachers College, Columbia University, which focused on the content (what to teach?) and process (how to teach?) in Latvian teacher education development. Practical constraints on innovation in Latvian teacher education are identified and discussed from three different perspectives – teacher educators, their students, and teachers who supervise student teaching in schools. The results highlight interesting similarities and differences with regard to obstacles in implementing innovative teaching methods between the three focus groups, particularly emphasising the need for closer collaboration and shared responsibility between the teacher educators, students, and school teachers when introducing teaching innovations in practice.

Introduction

There is an acceptance of the belief that development in the political, economic, and social spheres of society can be best achieved by means of improving the quality of education. This is especially relevant in the context of the educational development policies in the former Soviet Union, and Latvia in particular, which has been in transition from totalitarianism to democracy since 1991. Unlike the Soviet educational model, which placed reproduction of the labour force at the centre of educational development, current educational planning in Latvia is primarily determined by social needs and therefore is characterised by the current expansion and diversification of the educational system.[1] Maintaining appropriate quality of education during this transition period is essential in order to trigger self-sustaining transformation of the society.

Successful implementation of educational reforms largely depends on the enabling action of teachers. Qualitative changes in educational practice can occur only when teachers understand the importance of these changes, feel secure about implementing them, and accept them as their own.[2] Therefore, one of the most important factors in improving the quality of education in

transitional countries is by increasing general level and professional educational preparation of teachers.[3] However, as Leclercq suggested, the main question arising with regard to teacher training in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe concerns the extent to which teachers are joining in and supporting the reforms in which their education systems are engaged.[4]

Historical Context for Teacher Education Reform

In order to better understand the current state of pre-service teacher education in Latvia and to provide a context for its reform, it is first necessary to make a brief outline of the development of Latvian teacher education during the Soviet time.

Between 1940 and 1991, the Latvian system of education, much like those in other communist block nations, was hierarchical in structure in which all educational policies, curricula, methods, objectives, and examinations were instituted centrally from Moscow. For example, all school of a particular type (ranging from elementary schools to universities) and at a particular level were required "to teach the same lessons from the same book with the same methods at the same time".[5] No doubt, some educators employed slight variations of content, teaching styles, and methodologies, but the strict state supervision made these innovations difficult to sustain.

Academic fields such as history, literature, social studies, and foreign languages were saturated with political ideology. Marxist-Leninist philosophy, scientific communism, and dialectic materialism were mandatory and served as a primary basis for education programs in Soviet Latvia. Similarly, teacher education programs in exact sciences such as mathematics, chemistry, and computer sciences, put a stronger emphasis on subject matter and content rather than teaching methodologies. In this way, most teacher education institutions prepared mathematicians rather than math teachers, musicians rather than music teachers, and biologists rather than biology teachers. In other words, graduates of Soviet teacher education programs were experts in theoretical subject matter, yet they often lacked practical teaching skills.

Since the breakdown of the Soviet Union, Latvian education reform has been characterised by the opening and democratization of the former rigid state management and ideological control over education. Consequently, re-examination of educational programs that reflect subject-matter and practices of Soviet pedagogical traditions presents one of the most important areas for educational reform in independent Latvia.

Rationale for the Study: The Role of Reachers in Education Reform

One of the main goals in Latvian education reform is to "promote change through enhanced participation rather than increased state intervention."[6] Consequently, teachers' role and training are viewed as the most significant elements necessary to introduce new teaching practices and content. According to the Ministry of Education of Latvia, teachers play an important role in the process of transition to democracy because "only well-educated teachers in Latvia's schools will educate students so that they will be prepared for life in a democratic society and will be able to actively provide for the progress and development of their country."[7] Thus, teacher education and continuing education is viewed as a priority task for the state.

The majority of educational projects in Latvia focus on in-service teacher education and new textbook development for elementary, secondary and high schools. Particularly, the Latvian government, the Soros Foundation, the British Council, the United States Information Service and other aid agencies have allocated a considerable amount of financial resources to in-service teacher training programs – lectures, seminars, and workshops – which help teachers deal with rapid changes in Latvian schools. One of the main reasons for funding these in-service teacher training programs has been an urgency and necessity to respond to *the immediate needs* of Latvian teachers during the transitional period. For example, what subjects should be taught at school? How should these subjects be taught? How can schools prepare democratic and loyal citizens of the country?

However, only few projects have targeted pre-service teacher education as an arena of political, economic, and social changes. Most attempts of teacher training institutions to adapt to rapidly changing political, economic, and social realities have primarily been initiated on a local level. For example, the Consortium of Teacher Training Institutions (CTTI) was founded in 1993 to establish "an effective system of teacher training in Latvia" by exchanging useful information and resources; cooperatively developing new teaching and aid materials; organising conferences, seminars, and discussions; and jointly carrying out theoretical and practical research. However, the Consortium has not been an active player in education reform due to a lack of financial support.

Allocating the majority of financial resources to in-service teacher training programs creates a contradictory situation: in-service teachers are encouraged to introduce innovations in their teaching practice, while pre-service teachers continue to learn about "old" teaching materials, practices, and methodologies. This issue is highlighted in a Latvian Human Development Report which states that there is a considerably large percentage of students (36%), i.e. pre-service teachers, who feel inadequately prepared for their teaching careers.[8] The situation becomes even more problematic when we take into consideration the fact that the majority of current in-service teachers will soon reach their pension age, and will have to be eventually replaced by a "new" generation of teachers.[9]

In order to respond to the growing needs of Latvian pedagogical colleges and emphasise their role and potential impact on the future development of society, the Soros Foundation – Latvia (SFL) identified pre-service teacher education reform as one of its priority areas for 1998. In January 1998, the SFL's Transformation of Education Program in collaboration with the Institute of International Studies at Teachers College, Columbia University, organized a needs assessment workshop "Teacher education in Latvia: Recent developments and major challenges" which focused on the content (what to teach?) and process (how to teach?) in Latvian teacher education.

The Scope of the Study

The main goals of the needs assessment workshop were (1) to identify and analyse existing challenges and problems in Latvian pre-service teacher education; and (2) to formulate needs and project ideas for future collaboration.

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In order to gain a deeper understanding of the major issues in teacher education reform and have a mutually enriching workshop, the workshop participants drew on the following materials:

- innovative material (for example, new curricula, teacher manuals, new courses, or teaching material) or ideas that have been developed in their institutions in the last two years;
- surveys or studies that have been done in their institution that examine existing needs of teacher education; and
- project descriptions (international, national, or regional) or project ideas that they have planned in their institutions for the future.

Participants

Workshop participants included faculty members and students from teacher training institutions as well as teachers who supervise student teaching in schools. In this way, we expected to identify, discuss, and assess needs in Latvian teacher education development from *three different perspectives* – professors, students, and teachers.

Overall, there were 30 participants, including 12 faculty members from six teacher training institutions, 7 students from teacher training institutions, 7 teachers who supervise student teaching in schools, and 4 workshop moderators. Representatives from all six teacher training institutions (three of which are located outside Riga) participated in the workshop: *Daugavpils Pedagogical University, Latvia University, Latvian Academy of Sports Education, Liepaja Pedagogical Higher School, Rezekne University, Riga Teacher Training* and *Education Management Academy.*

Summary of Workshop Findings

(1) What are problems that you encountered when trying to implement new and innovative teaching methods and programs?

This question was discussed in four homogeneous groups to highlight similarities and differences with regard to problems in implementing innovations in teacher education as identified by:

1. professors (n=6/two groups);
2. students (n=7);
3. teachers who supervise student teaching in school (n=7).

Similarities

After discussion of the major problems or obstacles encountered when implementing new and innovative teaching methods and programs, the following issues were similarly identified by all three groups of participants:

- Lack of financial resources.
- No connection between teacher training institution and school.
- No skills for using innovative teaching methods in practice.
- Assessment issues.

- *Lack of financial resources*

All groups of participants identified a lack of financial resources as a major obstacle to implementing new and innovative teaching methods and programs. For professor and student groups, the main obstacles in implementing innovations seemed to be a lack of educational materials, i.e. equipment, books, and articles. For example, the professor and student groups emphasized that often there is only one book available for the class of 50–100 students, thus making it difficult, if not impossible, to teach or learn "new" material.

Due to the difficult economic situation teacher salaries do not reflect the importance of their work. The teacher group noted that they are not remunerated for supervising student teaching in schools which creates one of the obstacles for working innovatively and qualitatively with students during their practicum.

- *No connection between teacher training institution and school*

The professor, student, and teacher groups held a similar opinion that there is a lack of connection between teacher training institutions and schools. For example, professors admitted that their students look excited before going to their school practicum, but they are "shocked" when they come back. There is nobody to offer them professional advice in this situation.
Teachers explained further that often school teachers are more conservative than professors, and students find themselves between two "grindstones" – one, what they have been taught at teacher training institution, and the other, what they are asked to do at school. Insights gained from student group indicate that "there is no room for innovations in schools" and that some teachers "provide already prepared lesson plans and ask students to implement them." Thus, in order to get a good grade for school practicum, students try to "adapt" to these different standards by "saying one thing at teacher training institution and doing the opposite at school."

Moreover, the student group noted that their professors from teacher training institutions rarely visit them during school practicum to give advice and discuss teaching issues. Students mentioned that their school practicum often seems "useless" because their school experiences are neither discussed in class nor integrated in their further learning.

- *No skills for using innovative teaching methods in practice*

Both teacher trainers and their students identified their lacking practical skills for use of innovative teaching methods in their practice. Teacher trainers admitted that they "talk" about innovations thinking that "talking *about* innovations will bring about educational changes." In other words, teacher trainers can describe "new" teaching methods, but their thinking and approach to teaching does not change. As a result, they are frustrated and think that the new methods are "bad." Similarly, students observed that their professors "talk about innovative teaching practice, but rarely use these innovations in their own teaching."

- *Assessment issues*

Assessment of learning outcomes was identified as a major obstacle for implementing innovative teaching methods by teacher trainers/professors and teachers who supervise student teaching in schools. Professors explained that there is "no continuity between educational goals, content, and the learning process." For example, teacher trainers who use innovative teaching methods in their classrooms say that "there is a mismatch between educational objectives and assessment of learning outcomes." While trying to implement new and innovative teaching methods, they

are still required to measure learning outcomes according to the "old" content-based standards. The participants emphasized that "this is where all the problems start."

Differences

In addition to the four issues similarly identified by all three groups of participants, there were different and sometimes opposite opinions expressed with regard to other problems teacher trainers, students, and school teachers experienced when implementing innovations in their educational environments.

- *No balance between theory and practice*

All of the participants mentioned that there is an inadequate balance between theory and practice in most Latvian teacher training institutions. However, their views with regard to what has to be changed differed considerably. For example, professors of teacher training institutions suggested that more attention should be paid to educational theory and philosophy which is problematic because "there are no clear priorities for education in the country."

On the other hand, the students and teachers emphasized that teacher education programs should focus more on teaching and classroom management skills. Student group suggested that they "need more practical skills" such as how to develop lesson plans, how to organize and present educational material, what teaching methods to use in different circumstances, how to teach in interesting and innovative ways, and how to find supplemental resources and materials when they are not immediately available.

- *New teacher is not psychologically prepared to introduce innovations*

School teachers observed that often students are not psychologically prepared to introduce innovations at school, especially when they meet with a conservative school environ-ment, including "state standards, directives, seven grades for each student, a certain set amount of home assignments." As a result, new teachers are not able to implement their teaching philosophy and give up, resorting to stereotypical and traditional teacher behaviour.

Similarly, school teachers noted also that pupils should be psychologically prepared to work with a student teacher. Discipline problems occur when pupils perceive student teachers "as their equals who are still learning." In order to deal with these discipline problems, student teachers often start playing the role of a "strict and severe teacher" paying no attention to innovative teaching.

- *Inflexible university structure*

Both groups of teacher trainers noted that the inflexible university structure presents an obstacle to introducing innovations in their teaching practice. This especially refers to introducing new study courses and programs which usually require a lot of effort and too much time.

- *Fear of responsibility*

Teacher trainers admitted that often they fear responsibility for introducing innovations and that is why they look for outside factors – inflexible university structure, students' "reproductive way of thinking," or lack of educational materials – to account for an absence or failure of introducing innovations in their teaching practice.

(2) What has helped and supported you in implementing innovative teaching methods and programs at your institution?

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Teacher education professors, students, and school teachers worked in four mixed groups to discuss what has helped and supported them in implementing innovative teaching methods and programs in their educational environments. The following points were identified as particularly important for successful implementation of innovations:

- Support from the administration of teacher training institutions.
- Shared responsibility between professors, students, and school teachers when implementing innovations.
- Clear goals and objectives or "project-oriented thinking."

- *Support from administration of teacher training institutions*

The project participants emphasised that successful implementation of innovations in teacher education largely depends on support from university administration, including rectors, vice-rectors, deans, and department deans. "Success stories" tell about university administrators who take a personal interest in introducing innovations and actively participate in educational projects in their institutions. For example, Liepaja Pedagogical University holds "Monday Workshops," regular meetings for university faculty and administrators, which provides a possibility for teacher trainers to share their ideas, discuss problems, and exchange experiences on a regular basis.

- *Shared responsibility between professors, students, and school teachers*

Shared responsibility between professors, students, and school teachers was identified as another component for successful implementation of innovations in teaching practice. Particularly, this refers to strengthening cooperation between teacher training institutions and schools in Latvia. Rather than looking for outside factors to account for a lack of teaching innovations either at teacher training institutions or schools, the workshop participants admitted that it is more effective to work together to address the existing problems. For example, teacher associations were identified as one of the ways to enhance cooperation between teacher trainers, school teachers, and students. Another interesting example from practice was provided by the Riga Teacher Training and Education Management Academy which has organized a "small academy" to provide a possibility for school teachers to co-teach with teacher trainers at the institution.

- *Clear goals and objectives or "project-oriented thinking"*

Teacher trainers, students, and school teachers identified that clear goals and objectives or "project-oriented thinking" help in a systematic implementation of educational innovations in teacher training institutions. It was observed that educational changes have been often dictated by the interests and institution of individual education administrators, not a goal-oriented institutional program. As a consequence, good intentions have not produced the intended results.[10] Considering this issue, the workshop participants emphasized the need for joint efforts on the part of educators, administrators, and students as well as the population at large in setting clear educational goals and objectives.

What is ahead?

Based on the results of the two group breakout sessions, the participants discussed ideas for new educational projects to address the existing problems. All project ideas suggested during the brainstorming session were formulated and briefly discussed by the workshop participants. In order to identify the three most "important" projects, each participant chose three project ideas

from the project list and rated these projects on the scale from one to three, with 1–the lowest and 3–the highest. The following three projects were identified as the most important:

- *Alternative assessment in teacher education*

As discussed earlier, traditional assessment of learning outcomes presents a major obstacle for implementing innovative teaching methods in teacher training institutions and schools. This problem is not limited to teacher education, but is characteristic of higher education establishments in Eastern and Central Europe at large. The Civic Education Project's "Education for the Transition" report highlights that there is a traditional emphasis at Central and East European universities on lecturing where students are viewed as passive listeners.[11] This is directly reflected in student assessment, where the primary emphasis is on reproducing the content of a particular subject matter. The workshop participants admitted that in order to successfully and systematically introduce interactive teaching methods, development of an alternative assessment system should be considered. This means that student assessment should include not only knowledge of educational content, but also learning process and skills.

- *Strengthening connections between teacher training institutions and schools*

The results of the needs assessment workshop indicated that teacher training institutions continue to be viewed in isolation, disconnected from the larger education reform in the country. This is clearly reflected in a lack of connections between teacher training institutions and schools. The project participants suggested that this problem could be addressed by "adopting schools" or creating model school sites connected to teacher education institutions. In this way, teacher education institutions will be directly connected to schools, and student teachers would receive adequate support when transferring their teaching skills to real classrooms.

- *Skills-based education model (particularly such skills as critical thinking, cooperative learning, problem solving, risk-taking etc.)*

Latvian teacher educators, students, and school teachers admitted that often they lack practical skills for implementing innovations in their practice. This is usually caused by the fact that most national and international education projects have been short-term with the primary purpose of providing the participants with new information and ideas. Unfortunately, these projects have rarely offered practical assistance and on-going support in the process of implementation of these ideas. As a result, while teacher educators gain access to new materials, they are often at a loss in using and implementing them in innovative ways. Latvian teacher educators, students, and school teachers emphasized that it is more effective to support new ways of teaching and learning by providing a forum for educators to work together to generate their own insights and understandings through collaborative national networks.

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Student Involvement in University Renewal: Course Evaluations as a Means of Creating Student Responsibility

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ABSTRACT This paper discusses the introduction of end-of-course student evaluations in post-Soviet universities. Course evaluations are seen as a means to increase student responsibility for the progress of their studies and as a principal means to balance out power relations that overly favour the teacher. The influence of the latter on the academic freedom of both students and university lecturers is further investigated.

"[I]f you want to know if a restaurant
is good you ask the customers,
not the cook or the proprietor."[1]

Introduction

One of the remnants of the Soviet educational system on the tertiary level can be characterised as a tendency towards teacher autocracy and hierarchical relationships between teacher and student. The university teacher is perceived as somebody enlightened, somebody who possesses the knowledge and has the creativity and power to produce new knowledge. This attitude is based on the teacher-centred model of the university, following the traditions established by the University of Paris in the Middle Ages and strengthened by the views of the Era of the Enlightenment. This model can be contrasted with the Bologna-type of student-centred university. The central organisational principle at the University of Paris was that students came to listen to the lectures of the outstanding scholars currently residing in Paris and to learn what those scholars could and wanted to teach. The students thus paid the scholars for the possibility of attending their lectures. In Bologna, however, the students hired the teachers, who then taught the subjects that the students considered necessary and wanted to study.[2] Nowadays these two types of universities are united in one under the slogan of academic freedom: *Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit*, the freedom to teach and the freedom to learn[3].

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While Soviet-era universities enjoyed neither of those freedoms, the exclusion of students from the decision making process and from the active production of knowledge has left its traces in present day higher education in terms of lack of student responsibility for the progress of their studies, insufficient skills for the formulation of constructive criticism, a lack of self reliance in research, and in power relations that favour the teacher. One of the tasks of the current university reforms is to increase student involvement in the planning of their studies at university, in improving the quality of both learning and teaching and in controlling their learning progress. In the following, I am going concentrate on one of the means for achieving this, namely, course evaluations by students. My experience of the use of course evaluations comes from a small private university in Estonia.

End-of-Course Student Evaluations

As stated above, in the Soviet era course evaluations were not considered to be necessary, everything was pre-planned by the authorities and there was no space for change. In recent years, our universities have started to introduce course evaluations as is commonly practised in the democratic universities of Western Europe and the U.S. When I started to teach at university level in autumn 1994, I also asked my students for feedback. I made up written questionnaires using the example of American, Finnish and Swedish course evaluations. I needed the feedback to improve my teaching skills and to show the students that I care about their opinions and need their help in changing the quality of the courses. Considering the lack of self-confidence of a new teacher, this was a brave step. When I got back the evaluations and realised, to my relief and surprise, that the students had been much less critical than I myself had been self-critical, I started to think how I could best make use of the answers and suggestions.

This turned out to be more difficult than I had expected, because the responses were quite different and even contradictory. Some students, namely, said that my course had been too difficult, while others said that it had been too easy. Some said that they had got very much new information, others that they had rather got too little new knowledge. Some said that my presentation of the new material had been very clear, others that they found it unclear and difficult to follow. Some said that the feedback that they got from me was absolutely sufficient, others that they had got no feedback whatsoever in response to their performance.

Interpretation of Evaluations

'What should I do with this kind of knowledge?', I asked myself after having read through the evaluation sheets. How should I change myself to meet the needs and level of the students? To what degree should a university teacher adapt herself to her students? What about the personality and character of the teacher, should I allow myself some freedom in retaining my peculiarities? Can I individualise my teaching strategies and the teaching content to every single student? Are the students ready to accept and respect me as a 'friend', or will they start making use of this freedom and start dictating the content and form of the course? Do they know better what they need and what they want? Should I know better the standards of an academic education? Where is the balance between teacher adaptation and student adaptation? How

objective are such course evaluations and do they measure at all what they are planned to measure?

These were only some of the questions I got then, and, as it now seems to me, they reflect quite naturally the typical identity problems of a new teacher, specifically, the conflict between the role of the student that she is used to, and the role of the teacher that she has to get used to. At the same time, some of the issues that became evident for me through these questionnaires appear to point to some central questions regarding academic freedom and university education in general.

The Resistance to Course Evaluations

Course evaluations are perceived as threatening not only by young university teachers, but also by experienced ones. Why do they consider the reliability of course evaluations to be dubious and why are university lecturers afraid of student evaluations (read: student critique)? There are several reasons.

Resistance to the introduction of course evaluations is a method of self-defence against the threat of changing oneself, one's behaviour and values and a defence against the imposition of foreign norms in place of one's own standards.

Frequently, still, the feeling can be characterised as a justified fear of students' over-criticality. This over-criticality is a direct result of students' disappointment with university courses and university lecturers, who fail to correspond to students' personal expectations of perfection. Many new students still believe in ideal people, whom they hope to find at university, and in uni-correct answers, which they hope to get to their questions about their subject and the world in general. This (immature) criticality is reinforced by the very nature of the profession of an intellectual, which also is based on conscious criticism and which the students come to university to acquire.

Another cause for resistance to student evaluations by university teachers is that toleration of criticism is not the strongest side of university lecturers. On the contrary, those people have often chosen to continue their careers in academia in order to be far away from politics and power games, they want to pursue the discovery of truth in peace and without further distractions. Startup writes that in the times when universities were first created they were considered to be "places of withdrawal from the everyday world" in a similar way to monasteries.[4] To a greater or lesser extent, this ideal still seems to be followed in the present day.

It is also true that students tend to value more highly courses that have been presented entertainingly at the expense of scientific content, rather than those that are thorough and dense in content (and thus often difficult) with a less amusing performance. Again, interpersonal skills are usually not the main strengths of academics: hermitage and even isolation in research does not entice people with high sociability needs.

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Lehrfreiheit and Lernfreiheit

For all the reasons given above, it can be concluded that while every kind of evaluation can be treated as a value judgement arising from one's expectations, the expectations of students and those of university teachers do not always coincide. Furthermore, if we define freedom as a lack of restrictions in acting according to one's own value judgements, then the *Lehrfreiheit* of the university lecturer and *Lernfreiheit* of the student may come into conflict. This means that an increase in one entails a reduction in the other. The question is how to achieve a balance between the two. In Soviet universities power relations favoured the university staff while in Western universities the relations are less biased. Course evaluations are one means to guarantee *Lernfreiheit* and for this reason they have been strongly demanded by students in the West. Hence, student evaluation of courses are not only a way to increase teacher accountability, but also a sign of students being active and showing responsibility for their own studies.

The case of post-Soviet universities shows, paradoxically on first sight, that it is first and foremost the teachers themselves who are striving for the introduction of course evaluations and in this way also standing up for the rights of students. Apparently, the common aims of teachers and students have not yet been caused to diverge much in post-Soviet countries by the imperative *publish or perish* on the one side and by the requirements of market society on the other, both of which will come to strongly affect the share of time and other limited resources.

Coming back to the teacher-centred university that I above traced back to the University of Paris and to the student-centred university ideal originating from Bologna, it seems to me more and more that those questions do not belong to the past. Barr and Tagg see the replacement of earlier teacher and teaching-centred universities by student and learning-centred ones as a paradigm shift that is currently taking place in American universities, led and pioneered by progressive pedagogues.[5] Yet, this kind of shift is most probably not based on teacher initiative alone. Universities are by no means isolated from society and are increasingly subjected to the same demands set by the market as other institutions. While Startup suggests the chief purpose of a university to be the creation of communal life facilitating reflection, i.e. learning and creating, the *Zeitgeist* of our time seems to be characterised by universities whose precise idea and ideals are defined by the students.[6]

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Teaching through Content: Using Content Materials in the Teaching of a Second Language

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ABSTRACT In these times of extensive changes – political, social and educational – sweeping through Central and Eastern Europe, all aspects of teaching have to be re-modelled. This paper looks at some practical means of transition from the traditional, formal teaching system to a new one which involves active participation of students and a different approach to educational goals as far as teaching of a second language is concerned.

Introduction

Over the last few years, Poland's educational system has undergone extensive change. The teaching of foreign languages at universities and colleges also requires substantial modification. The transition from the so called 'traditional method', which involves the teacher being in a strong position, a formal one-sided relationship with students, and traditional textbooks, is by no means easy.

For quite a long time, the task of teaching a second language at the Jagiellonian University has been assigned to a separate body called the Foreign Language Centre. The practice adopted there is similar to that in all language schools – in every group students have approximately the same level of language skills, but they have a totally different academic background. Thus, it is impossible to tie the class syllabus to the course of study and to help the students to gain confidence in reading scholarly materials. There have been attempts to teach „special English" to science and medical students, but the courses use prepared texts, quite often written by non-native speakers, and their usefulness in real terms is doubtful.

Two years ago a newly created Faculty of Management and Social Communication introduced a new approach to teaching English. Some of the faculty departments appointed English teachers as members of the staff, in the hope they would become specialists in the field, in addition to possessing language skills. Such teachers, or language specialists, could help the students not only to achieve mastery in language, but also to learn English as a way to gain more knowledge in their chosen academic discipline.

In the Department of Librarianship and Information Science, English has been a part of the study curriculum since 1995, but the English teacher for the department was appointed not earlier than after the beginning of this academic year.

Course Details

I was offered the job of teaching English and interpreting some classes for the CEP visiting lecturer. The course's experimental character was inevitable from the beginning. First, I started classes in mid-October and had not had much previous experience in library studies. Second, due to the overcrowded facilities, I was left with no chance for any technical equipment better than a blackboard and a piece of chalk. In that case, I intended to do a structural course of English with some vocabulary concerning the library and information. But working with Dr. Barbara Feldman, I soon realised that there was a possibility of utilising a variety of library materials for at least some of my English classes.
For the purpose of this paper, I would like to present a modified English language course I taught to a group of the 2nd-year students whose level of English was between intermediate and

upper-intermediate. We met once a week for two class periods over the winter semester and we will continue next semester. At the beginning, we made a contract under which to get a credit students should not miss more than one class session, if not seriously ill, do all the assigned tasks, and actively participate in the classes. I also admitted to having little experience in the library field and asked for the students' help.

Course Outline

Course title: Study of Professional Publications Written in English

Description: Utilisation of content materials in teaching of a second language

Goals: Helping the students to:

- read and understand the selected English-language library publications
- understand the basic problems of cultural translation from a foreign language
- search for and locate the appropriate information/material in the English-language sources
- compose a piece of creative writing in English
- learn and practise presentation techniques

Objectives: The students should:

1. Become familiar with various types of the English-language library publications and learn about differences between Polish and English periodicals (vocabulary).
2. Read several short book reviews from professional journals, analyse language phrases and structures, and translate the chosen one into Polish (confidence in English, analysis, translation skills).
3. Read one of the given children picture books, write a short review and make a presentation of both the book and the review - to be evaluated by their peers and the teacher (group work, analysis, creative writing based on model texts, presentation techniques).
4. Use their pre-learned skills to search for the descriptions of various Christmas traditions in the English-speaking countries (research/ sources: books, non-library periodicals, the Internet, English native speakers; oral presentation).

5. Read and discuss the article concerning mission statements of the public library and present their own examples of prac-tical implementation of the missions (confidence in English, translation skills, creative thinking, oral presentation).

6. Searched for information on types of services provided by public libraries in other countries. For more credits they should locate e-mail addresses of libraries and asked for specific information (research in various sources, communica-tion skills, presentation techniques).

7. Evaluate the winter course syllabus and make proposals for the next semester (evaluation, analysis, creative thinking).

Alongside the main course topic, we continued with the structural exercises in English, giving them half an hour of each class session.

Discussion

The good points:

- Half of the group really enjoyed the work and fully participated in every activity and assignment. I would like to present some examples of their work. Here is a review of a children's picture book (I corrected only obvious mistakes):

"*Once upon a time there was a small village in China. In that village there lived a mother with two little sons. Her first son had a very long and honourable name, Tikki tikki tembo – no sa rembo – chari bari ruchipip peri pembo. Her second son had a short name, Chang. Near their home there was an old well. Mother always warned the boys not to play near the well but the boys did not listen to her and something terrible happened.*

It is an old folk tale from China written in easy language which every child will understand. It is about a Chinese tradition of giving the firstborn son a very long and difficult to say name, and about some problems that may result from that custom.

This book has very beautiful and colourful pictures stylised on traditional Chinese art. Children will love that book. (Tiki Tiki Tembo/Arlene Mosel; ill. Blair Lent. New York. Scholastic inc.)."

And here are some of the students genuine ideas about what to do to bring the missions of the public library to life:

- *organise library tours for young children to show them the books*
- *establish a period of time in which a child may come to the library and ask for help in homework*
- *organise an exhibition of children's work in the library*
- *keep a pet in the library to make the children more willing to come*

- *have a librarian familiar with computer skills to give public lectures for library users*
- *use the library facilities to organise contests, lectures and small exhibitions*
- print out flyers of new acquisitions in certain areas.

- Over the winter term the students started to feel more responsible for the course. When asked at the beginning about their own proposals for the syllabus, they had none. Now they suggest more reading for content and even more discussion activities, which involve preparation from their side.

- They also became more confident in their ability to speak English. We usually spend the first 10 minutes of our class session on 'warming up' and now the students talk without being called on.

Things to be improved:

- Poor class equipment resulted in the students having to prepare a lot of homework out of the class and made group work very limited.

- A few students found the requirements too difficult for their level of English and did only the basic work.
- The students are quite inexperienced in formulating their own ideas and in creative thinking, thus such activities should be preceded by some helpful hints from the teacher.

- This term we need to work more on maintaining the balance between the casual atmosphere in the classroom and the discipline of returning the written work on time.

Conclusion

Although the character of the course was experimental and based on my intuitive understanding of the students' needs rather than on a thorough knowledge, I think it was a meaningful experience for both sides. The initial contract with the students helped to create an informal and friendly atmosphere, and at the same time prevented the lack of discipline so typical for the 'less important' subjects of the curriculum. We have learnt a lot since the beginning of the last semester and I hope we will use both our strong and weak points as guidelines towards a better teaching/learning model for the next time.

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Interactive Learning Within the Self: Writing the Research Notebook to Heighten Critical Thinking Skills

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ABSTRACT The author introduces and advocates the use of the research notebook as a tool to improve students' writing skills. The advantages of this method, as well as students' attitudes to it, are examined. The research notebook is potentially a tool both to improve writing and to nurture a democratically inclined citizenry is post-Communist countries.

"Writing is not a matter of taking dictation from your self; it is more like a conversation with a highly responsive and reflective other person."
Frank Smith

Within the emerging or transitional democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, the current focus on education and its reform has necessarily been shaped by the need to prepare the next

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generation for a "different world," a world which, it is thought, will be shaped by less- centralised governments, by more democratic societies, and most importantly, by a thoughtful citizenry directly involved in the governing of its daily life.[1] Given this broadly imagined world in which citizens are now to be generally active rather than passive and the belief that education is directly related to an individual's role in society, there has also emerged the need to scrutinise and redesign current educational structures. Within the universities through to the grammar schools (and particularly in the teacher training colleges), the requirements of degree programs and the content of individual courses are being evaluated, and teaching methods themselves are being seriously reconsidered. Within this reevaluation of teaching techniques, much emphasis is being placed on the methods that promote "critical thinking" and "active learning." [2]

Though the term critical thinking can be defined quite specifically, I will be using it in its most general sense, that is, the ability to define, to classify, to summarise, to question, to deconstruct complex patterns, to generate evaluative criteria, to imagine hypotheses, to establish inferences, to analyse problems, to identify procedures. The concept of active learning has been recently discussed from the perspectives of both the individual student (hence the reform of teaching methods themselves becomes an issue) and the larger institutional frameworks of higher education (leading to the reevalution of how institutions are organised).[3] In general, I will make use of the term active learning to indicate the type of instruction which expects critical and creative thinking, assumes the co-operation of learners as they attempt to generate ideas and solutions to problems, and considers that a structured dialogue between students themselves regarding the material being learned is as fundamental as that dialogue which occurs between student and teacher

Traditionally, the teaching techniques that promote critical thinking and active learning tend to revolve around students working in small groups or pairs, or articulating verbally the new material to others, or functioning as team members identifying problems and creating solutions. It is well-known that when students are required to communicate the material they have just learned to another person or are asked to demonstrate the new ideas to a group, levels of comprehension and student achievement rise.

However, another valuable active learning technique which simultaneously heightens critical thinking skills is one whereby students simply write about what they are learning by responding informally in a notebook or copybook to carefully designed questions.
The "research notebook assignment" which I will describe in the following pages is a teaching technique which, for the past twelve years, I have used in a wide variety of forms with a wide variety of students, an assignment which stresses written reflection instead of verbal. Rather than discussing their ideas aloud (as in small group activities), students engage in a written conversation that is conducted within their own minds: they are basically talking to themselves about what they have just learned, what they are still unsure of , and what they still want to know. For example, one of the questions that students respond to in writing is the following:

> *Write about some material that you are presently reading or learning at lectures. What is confusing to you about these ideas, the writing, the presentation, or the field in general? What is difficult to understand about the entire topic or any part of it? What questions would you ask the writer or the professor?*

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For students to write informally about what they are thinking or learning is not at all uncommon in the United States: the use of writing journals, learning logs, idea diaries is quite standard in American rhetoric and composition courses on the university level and not unusual in Reading and English classes from the elementary through the secondary years. However, even in the United States, with its commitment to the teaching of writing, the use of writing as a technique to stimulate active learning and critical thinking has only been generally explored. Even rarely considered is how this type of writing assignment functions in a classroom which is multicultural and multidisciplinary.[4]

Though the present form of this research notebook assignment has been designed for graduate students enrolled in my "Academic Writing for Medievalists" course in the Medieval Studies Department of Central European University – Budapest, most of my experience with this assignment has been with 18–22 year olds in the United States, very few of whom ever intended to continue on to graduate school and very few of whom ever intended to continue their studies in the humanities. In addition, though this particular assignment has been used as a requirement in an overall course in academic writing, it can be used in all disciplines where critical thinking and active learning are valued and where ideas must eventually be communicated to a larger audience. These could include the fields of physics, biology, or chemistry, or those of economics, business administration, and sociology, not to mention, of course, those that traditionally have always included extended writing assignments, the humanities. I have consistently observed that students in all fields benefit greatly from written reflection on what they are presently learning and written reflection on what they want to learn. I also find this assignment valuable for many types of students: for those with introverted and extroverted personalities, for those who are advanced in their knowledge base of any given field or those who are beginners to the material, for both female and male students, and for students of a wide variety of cultures.

In my present position, all students enrolled in the Medieval Studies department must take my course, "Academic Writing for Medievalists," which focuses on the development of the writing skills necessary for these graduate students to present their ideas in English to an international community of scholars; thus, my basic assignments for the entire 12-week course include writing summaries, outlines for oral presentations, seminar papers, and analyses of written texts. I also focus on teaching the process of writing – the different stages of creating material, drafting the ideas, revising the material, editing and proof-reading the final assignment. Thus, students must achieve not only a "finished" product (a completed seminar paper, for example), but must also focus on the quite different types of thinking and writing processes which they use in order to complete the assignment – the stages of their own writing and thinking. Within this type of writing course, I use the research notebook as 1 out of 5 major assignments, and it is specifically designed to support and enhance the first two stages of the writing process: the creating and drafting stage.[5] For example, the following question causes a student to "begin" in written form the thinking and organising of a particular assignment, leading later to a completed presentation or seminar paper:

> *Think about the oral presentation you are required to give in the MA Thesis Seminar and answer these questions thoroughly. First, what is the exact set of requirements for this presentation? What is your major question or problem at this time? What are the sources you will use to approach the question? What are the basic problems you are having with the research itself? Why do you want to investigate this material or question?*

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Now exactly what do I mean by "research notebook" and what exactly do I require? In general, the basic thrust of the research notebook is that it is a simple, practical, and focused assignment in which students must write about what they are learning and thereby stimulate their own development into more advanced thinkers, no matter what their field.

First, this assignment is designed to be a simple routine for the student, creating just basic discipline. For each question, students are required to write one complete page of the notebook, one side only, from top to bottom, each line filled in response to the question.[6] They may write more than one page, but not less. They must write at least 4 responses per week, and at the beginning of the term for about a couple of weeks, the first 10–15 minutes of each class are set aside so they can develop this habit. At first, the discipline is simply to provide a quantity of writing, to gain a certain fluency and ease with using a pen or pencil to transfer their thoughts onto a page. Therefore, at the beginning of the course, the questions will often focus the student on material that is easy or fun to write about, for example, distinct sensory experiences or memorable experiences:

> *Think about your most favourite meal or your most horrible eating experience. Choose one culinary memory and describe it as thoroughly as possible – using sensory, concrete, and specific detail.*

This research notebook is indeed, at first, the simple task of guiding students into the habit of writing down what they are thinking, just a disciplined habit, a routine. And because the true audience for the research notebook is ideally the writer, not the teacher, the rhetorical or grammatical quality of the writing is not important in this particular assignment.[7] What is most important is that each student answers all the required questions and establishes a consistent habit of dialoguing with his or her own mind.

Second, the assignment is also designed to be completely practical and is not intended to be writing simply for the sake of writing or simply to keep students busy during class time. The questions are carefully designed to cause students to begin articulating the knowledge they are currently gaining for required assignments of either my class or of the other classes they are taking, be it economics or environmental sciences. For example, if a student has to read an article or listen to a lecture for a history course, she can use that material as a base for the research notebook writing (see questions for Entries # 10,11,13, 17, for example). This assignment thus becomes self-energising because it is in the student's self-interest to begin writing about something he is already required to do: whether it is a reading assignment for a literature class, an oral report for a business class, lab reports for biology, test preparation or memorisation for a language class does not matter. What matters is that the writing reinforces the learning that is necessary for any of the students' courses. Quite noticeably, through writing in the research journal, students are re-telling, re-viewing, re-hearing the information or ideas they are responsible for at the same time they are learning them, thereby, reinforcing the memory and supporting their own required intellectual foci.

However, as students begin to write about what they are learning, they are often disconcerted by their own confusion and their lack of clarity in relation to the new knowledge. Discovering one's confusion about what one is learning is one of the most practical and crucial consequences of the research notebook assignment, for, once students are given tools to handle their lack of clarity, they begin to become more self-directive in their own learning processes.[8]

Bearing this in mind, there is the third component that the writing in the research notebook is also deliberately focused on the open-ended question-answer process, there being no "right" or "correct" answers to the questions. The right answer is always what the student is thinking at the time. The initial focus on questions to which only the student has the real answer is also accompanied by a focus on having the student discover what she or he does not yet know or understand, for example:

> *Write everything you can remember from the class lecture on the writing process, the movement from writer-based prose to reader-based prose. Which aspects of the writing process do you prefer or are the most enjoyable for you? Which stages or tasks do you dislike? Which stages of the writing process take the most time for you? What do you want to know more about?*

Noticeably, the students' subsequent awareness of their gaps in knowledge is directed into a complementary activity whereby they formulate the next steps in their learning process. This process of writing what one knows, of finding areas of confusion, and of finding solu-tions to this lack of clarity becomes an interactive process within the mind: the ideas and the confusion coexist with the student-learner as problem-solver. Students actually gain control over their thinking processes by identifying what they do not know. And, indeed, by generating their own solutions, they gain confidence in directing their intellectual development:

> *Think about the Research Methods assignment which you just completed. What was the process you used to find the information? Where and how did you get the materials? What was the most difficult aspect of this research project? What caused you the most confusion? How do you plan to do your next research project differently?*

Through writings such as these, students become more aware of how they acquire and retain information, more aware of how they can direct their own learning, more able to consider the next steps for their own thinking.[9]

In general, this overall design of the research notebook, deliberately simple, practical, and focused, insists that the student be disciplined and self-energised and reflective about the self as a knower. These I believe are major characteristics of a critical thinker that can be activated through the simple act of writing 4 pages a week.

But why do students need to write about their ideas and the material they are learning, why not simply discuss them with other students in class? Before considering this question, it is first necessary to highlight the problems which might be encountered because it is actually *writing itself* which is the mode of expression and then, second, to address the question of why the requirement of written expression over verbal expression.

In my experience, many students, at first, dislike this assignment. They are hostile to the seeming amount of extra work, to writing down something which is seemingly not going to be graded rigorously, or they do not like to write at all, period. Or they don't see the point: it seems a waste of time to simply write the answers to questions like a schoolgirl or boy. Eventually what begins to happen though is that one by one, students begin to experience what has been called the "flash of awareness," that is, the emergence, while they are writing, of a completely

new idea, an idea they had not consciously been aware of prior to the writing. This is the best case scenario. Other students begin to experience that writing essays and seminar papers becomes easier because they have thought through the ideas in writing before they even begin to "start" the specific assignment, be it a summary or an essay. Usually by the end of the semester, almost all students will admit that the assignment was, at least, quite useful and practical, many find it quite enjoyable, and only a few, 1 or 2, still begrudge the time they had to spend in dialogue with their own minds. [10]

Students do not only react with a bit of irritation but react with suspicion and fear as well. They will ask questions such as "who will read what I've written?" and "What will you do with this writing?" Indeed, a key point in the success of this assignment – and this cannot be overemphasised – is that the teacher must guarantee privacy and ownership. For it is the students who own what they have written and are in control of what is read by the teacher. For example, if a student does not want a particular page read by me (for whatever reason), she or he can simply fold the page so that I can see that the entry was completed, and they can staple or tape the page closed. Or if a student absolutely does not want to write on a certain question for personal reasons, I tell them simply to create a different question and write on that. If a student does not want me to "collect' their notebook and have it in my possession to look over, I will sit with them and review the writings with them there in front of me. Basically for this particular assignment which is "process based," I will redesign my reviewing procedures to make students comfortable. If students are not able to trust the teacher, the assignment will not work because all early stages of critical or self-reflective writing is still basically personal in the student's eyes, creating vulnerability in regard to assessment or evaluation.

The hostility, the suspicion, and the fear of inappropriate judgement are the basic problems with the fact that the assignment is a written one without any real "right" answers and an assignment which has the students articulating ideas, while they are still figuring them out, in a form that others might read. However, the main reason why these problems are worth dealing with is the fact that the activity of writing is in actuality a mode of knowing in and of itself, a way to know more clearly what one is attempting to learn.[11] Much recent research has shown that the act of writing is not so much a process of recording what one already knows or thinks but is rather a process of discovering what one knows or thinks about a particular topic.[12] The actual act of formulating written thoughts, of organising them, and of conversing with oneself about them – this act itself becomes one of learning what one knows and learning what one needs to know, indeed, by its very nature an active learning experience which integrates critical and creative thinking.

Thus, this research notebook assignment can provide thinking and writing skills which are necessary for all students in all types of educational programs. In addition, the experience with assessing information and evaluating its quality combined with the students' scrutiny of how they themselves learn and process knowledge and the activity of generating solutions for their individual problems does provide intellectual skills which certainly enhance their educational goals. Just as importantly, it also provides experience with thought processes which students in newly emerging democracies will find necessary for their roles as citizens.

Therefore, when I analyse the types of questions I "insist" students consider, it is obvious that they fall basically two groups. There are questions which look outside the self (what is actually being said or argued in this writing or lecture? what is the purpose of this or that activity? what

is the cause of this situation, how did it become that way, how does it stay this way? what are the major forces which shape the world around me?). There are also questions which look inside the self (why do I think the way I do? How do I think? By what processes do I come to a decision? How do my emotions, religious beliefs, family traditions affect my thinking?).

My experience is that this type of interaction within the self, between the outer observations and the inner gaze, as expressed informally in writing does indeed create a more engaged, alert, and independent learner in the classroom and more than likely, individuals willing to respond actively and thoughtfully to the society which surrounds them.

[1] For a brief overview of the relationship between the current political transition and higher education, one can consult *Education for the Transition, Part III. Higher Education Policy in Central and Eastern Europe, Country Reports* (Budapest: Civic Education Project in association with the Institut für die Wissenschaften von Menschen, 1997).

[2] See *Active Learning Strategies for the Higher Education: Proceedings of the Regional Workshop on Higher Education*, edited by Sandra L. Renegar and Benô Csápo (Szeged, Hungary: JATEPress, 1997).

[3] See Robert B. Barr and John Tagg, "From Teaching to Learning – A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education," *Change,* November/December, 1995, 13–25.

[4] The students I am presently teaching at Central European University originate from most all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe so that in one classroom, I will have at least 7 to 10, sometimes up to 13, different cultures represented, with all the differences in educational systems that this cultural variety implies and all the differences in native languages, and hence communication, that this variety implies. Second, the students range in age from around 23 to about 35 years old, meaning that some are just beginning their advanced studies and others are returning after scholarly work as teachers, writers, or researchers in institutes. And third, though the program is indeed a "Medieval" Studies Department, this does not mean that all the students have former training in a medieval area but rather that they intend to acquire this new field of study. And because it is Medieval "Studies, " it is an interdisciplinary program; thus in the same classroom, I will have those studying history, archaeology, philosophy, literature, economics, and art history, just to name the predominant ones. Therefore, what is critical to note is that there is no necessarily common or shared background among the students nor any necessarily shared set of intellectual interests.

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[5] In addition, for non-native speakers of English, these research notebook entries provide the necessary experience for "fluency development" in regard to the "language of writing and thinking in English."

[6] In general, as I write each question, I try to include simultaneously, a particular writing task (the actual content of my course), a particular thinking task, something of self-interest, and something which requires self-reflection. However, some questions focus the student on the task of recording observations only, and some questions emphasise the task of recording personal experiences.

[7] These writings are not intended to be a finished product which students will turn in for a grade. Thus, the writing in the research notebook is not assessed for the quality of the language or expression nor for its spelling, punctuation, syntax, sentence variety,

etc. Students, however, must use complete sentences when they write their responses, and the words must be written legibly: they are not to create lists of information, for example, or use an abbreviated code. The notebook is assessed for the "completion" of all the entries, but I select only 2–3 entries out of a group of 15 or so to review. I make written comments on these selected writings, based on the "writing technique" I set forth (for example, specific, concrete detail, use of sensory information, transitional phrases, sentence types, whatever). My comments then are not on the content but on the use of certain writing skills. The resulting "grade" is really tied to the number of entries completed, the practice of the craft, not the final quality or content.

[8] For example, one question is phrased: Write about the most curious, odd, weird, problematic, or confusing thing you have discovered while doing research on your MA thesis material (or any research this semester).

[9] Another question along this line: Think about your MA Thesis Seminar Oral Presentation. What was the most difficult aspect of this assignment? What was the major criticism you received? What questions did the audience ask and why? What do you think you did poorly and what do you think you did well? How are you going to change your research plan?

[10] In addition, I have had quite a few students mention to me a year or two later that though they do not use these specific methods on any consistent basis, they end up creating their own and find that they simply "know how to proceed" with writing an article or conference paper.

[11] Types of questions such as this one lend themselves well to this: Write one entire page about your interest in the tentative research topic you have selected for the MA Thesis. First, how did you become curious about this topic? What are you most interested in regarding this idea? Why do you think this area would be worth investigating? Why do you think this area of knowledge is important?

[12] The work of Donald Murray provides significant insights into this process, for example, "Writing as a Process: How Writing Finds Its Own Meaning," in *Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition*, edited by Timothy R. Donovan and Ben W. McClelland (Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1980) and "Making Meaning Clear: The Logic of Revision," *Journal of Basic Writing* 3, no. 3 (1981): 33–40.

The Accountable University: Changes in British Higher Education

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ABSTRACT This paper examines the impact of the recent changes in the British higher education system on teaching and learning. The balance between 'prompting from above' and input from the grassroots is assessed in terms of the change in academic culture towards greater accountability that is taking place in British universities.

Innovation

A wind of change has been sweeping through universities in Britain over the last 18 years, one that has ruffleed many academic feathers as its momentum has gathered. We have seen vast increases (33%) in student numbers (and hence class sizes), the creation of 35 new universities, and the establishment of a national scheme of Quality Assurance. The culmination of this process has been a National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education which was required to *"make recommendations on how the purposes, shape, structure, size and funding of higher education, icluding support for students, should develop to meet the needs of the United Kingdom over the next 20 years, recognising that higher education embraces teaching, learning, scholarship and research".* One major outcome of all this activity is that uni-versities are now more accountable for the quality of what they deliver and particularly in respect of teaching and learning. We are thus in the midst of a substantial culture change the like of which has not been seen in the 700 years or so of higher education in the UK.

But it would be wrong to suppose that all the prompting has come from above. Since 1980 there have been clear and purposeful endeavours to improve teaching and learning at the "grass roots" level. In this paper I propose to describe the various influences for change and some of the positive results they have achieved. Let us start with the grass roots.

Grass Roots

A number of initiatives have started with academics who had come to realise that if they were becoming bored, then almost certainly the same would be true of their students. They studied the literature, exercised their imaginations and experimented with new strategies and methods. One such venture was the "Non-Traditional Teaching Week" in 1987 at Oxford Brookes University (then Oxford polytechnic) when all members of staff were invited to experiment in their teaching methods at least once during the week. They were offered a free booklet full of ideas, consultancy support and the promise of a public exhibition of their experiences attended by the Vice Chancellor.

What kind of things did they do? An English Literature lecturer blocked out selected words in certain poems and invited his students to guess what the missing words were. A Maths tutor tried to teach as badly as possible in order to identify some of the causes of learning difficulties among his students. A seminar tutor left the room and left the students to discuss the topic in his absence. Health Studies students were asked to test their inter-personal skills by running an anti-smoking campaign in the entrance foyer and Chemistry students to test the hypothesis the "Learning 'parrot-fashion' constitutes a wasted learning opportunity". And a Modern Languages tutor with his students in a circle gave a short piece of text in French to one of them who had to translate it into English, before whispering it to the next student, who in turn had to translate it back to French and so on round the group. The effects of distortion in sequential translation were thus highlighted!

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Similar events to Non-Traditional Teaching Week were subsequently run in other universities and a book entitled '253 Interesting Ideas for Your Teaching' resulted from it all of which gave clear evidence of a climate of willingness to change.

More recently several universities in receipt of Enterprise funding (see below) have published booklets describing the numerous innovations in teaching and learning that have resulted from the programme.

Publications

The above mentioned book was in fact one of a series with the generic title of "The '53' Books", the first three of which were '53 Interesting Things to do in Your Lectures', '53 Interesting Things to do in Your Seminars and Tutorials', and '53 Interesting Ways to Access Your Students'. Most of these books (there are 20 titles now) contain briefly-stated ideas that readers can take or leave, but all are based on sound principles of teaching and learning. Another source of publications has been the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development, based at Oxford Brookes University, which has produced a series of practical training handbooks on a wide range of topics ranging from 'Developing Students' Transferable Skills' to 'Being an Effective Academic'. Various journals have developed: Studies in Higher Education, Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education and The New Academic to mention but a few and organisations to support improvements in teaching and learning have emerged, such as SEDA (Staff and Educational Development Association). Many universities now have their own staff development teams with a wide range of responsibilities, resource centres and, in some cases, research teams.

Training and Development

A principal outcome of this groundswell of interest in teaching and learning has been the advent of specific training courses for new academic staff. Thirty higher education institutions now have fully accredited courses to train new appointments (who usually have no prior experience of teaching) in a range of teaching and learning and assessment methods, course design and evaluation, and becoming and "effective academic"! Some of these schemes are linked into institutional structures such as probation and promotion. And each successful course member can claim an increasingly important addition to their CV when applying for future jobs. SEDA which presently accredits these courses also awards so-called Fellowships to those who can provide suitable evidence of their achievements as trainers and developers.

Research and Scholarship

It is of course paramount that the training of academic staff should be based on what we know about the ways students are likely to learn. This is not the place to write a survey of all the available literature on this topic, so I shall confine myself to some of the principal findings on student learning, drawn from Gibbs, 1992.

Approaches to learning

Students vary in their approaches to learning, whether it be the kind of student who seems gives back exactly what he or she was given in lectures or the one who naturally prefer to develop their own perspectives and syntheses of the subject. These two extreme intentions have been termed a surface approach and a deep approach.

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Surface approach: The student reduces what is to be learnt to the status of unconnected facts to be memorised. The learning task is to produce the subject matter at a later date (e.g. in an exam).

Deep approach: The student attempts to make sense of what is to be learnt, which consists of ideas and concepts. This involves thinking, seeking integration between components and between tasks, and 'playing' with ideas.

The majority of students both understand the difference between a surface and a deep approach and describe themselves as adopting whichever of the approaches seems appropriate. A small proportion of students, however, describe themselves as always taking a surface approach, and have difficulty understanding what the deep/surface distinction means. These students adopt a surface approach because they have a conception of learning which does not make it possible for them to go about learning in any other way.

Students develop an increasingly sophisticated conception of learning

Underlying the approach students take is their understanding of what learning itself consists of. This understanding changes, influenced by the context students find themselves in and by the learning demands these contexts make. Studies have identified five stages in the development of students' understanding, listed here with examples of the kinds of things students who have these conceptions say.

1. *Learning as an increase in knowledge.* The student will often see learning as something done to them by teachers rather than as something they do to, or for, themselves.

   'To gain some knowledge is learning… We obviously want to learn more. I want to know as much as possible'.

2. *Learning as memorising.* The student has an active role in memorising, but the information being memorised is not transformed in any way.
   'Learning is about getting it into your head. You've just got to keep writing it out and eventually it will go in'.

3. *Learning is acquiring facts or procedures which are to be used.* What you learn is seen to include skills, algorithms, formulae which you apply etc., which you will need in order to do things at a later date, but there is still no transformation of what is learnt by the learner.

   'Well it's about learning the thing so you can do it again when you are asked to, like in an exam.'

4. *Learning as making sense.* The student makes active attempts to abstract meaning in the process of learning. This may only involve academic tasks.

   'Learning is about trying to understand things so you can see what is going on. You've got to be able to explain things, not just remember them.'

5. *Learning as understanding reality.* Learning enables you to perceive the world differently. This has also been termed 'personally meaningful learning'.

The studies also revealed the following features:

Course characteristics associated with a surface approach

- A heavy workload
- Relatively high class contact hours
- An excessive amount of course material
- A lack of opportunity to pursue subjects in depth
- A lack of choice over subjects and a lack of choice over the method of study
- A threatening and anxiety-provoking assessment system

There is a considerable amount of evidence that assessment systems dominate what students are oriented towards in their learning. Even where lecturers say that they want students to be creative and thoughtful, students often recognise that what is really necessary, or at least what is sufficient, is to memorise. Even where lecturers really do want students to take a deep approach, the assessment system often allows students to pass despite taking a surface approach. Of course sometimes students misread the requirements of the assessment system and select a surface approach by mistake. Where students have to guess what they are supposed to be doing when they are learning, there is very strong tendency to adopt a surface approach. If students are uncertain what is required then they tend to take a surface approach.

Appropriate course design

Avoiding a surface approach is one thing, but what encourages a deep approach? Studies have identified a number of factors which are, in effect, the observe of factors which foster a surface approach: relatively low class contact hours, intrinsic interest in the subject and freedom in learning. Freedom may involve choice over content or method of learning or scope for intellectual independence. An additional factor is 'perceived good teaching'. What 'good teaching' consists of has been identified through many studies of teaching processes which are associated with a deep approach. Four key elements have been identified:

1. Motivation context

Deep learning is more likely when students' motivation is intrinsic and when student experiences a need to know something. Adults learn best what they need to learn in order to carry out tasks which matter to them. Students are likely to need to be involved in selecting what is to be learnt and in planning how the learning should take place if they are to experience 'ownership' of it. The motivational context is established by the emotional climate of the learning. While a positive emotional and motivational climate may be a necessary condition for deep learning, anxiety and instrumentalism may be sufficient conditions for surface learning.

2. Learner activity

Students need to be active rather than passive. Deep learning is associated with doing. If the learner is actively involved, then more connections will be made both with past learning and between new concepts. Doing is not sufficient for learning, however. Learning activity must be planned, reflected upon and processed, and related to abstract conceptions.

3. Interaction with others

It is often easier to negotiate meaning and to manipulate ideas with others than alone. The importance of discussion for learning is not a new idea, though there is precious little discussion in much of higher education. Interaction can take many forms other unconventional tutorials

and seminars, and autonomous student groups and peer tutoring can be very effective. Studies have even shown the student who does the tutoring to learn more dun the student who is tutored, confirming the everyday experience that the best way to learn something is to teach it.

4. A well-structured knowledge base

Without existing concepts it is impossible to make sense of new concepts. It is vital that students' existing knowledge and experience are brought to bear in learning. The subject matter being learnt must also be well structured and integrated. The structure of knowledge is more visible to and more useful to students where it is clearly displayed, where content is taught in integrated wholes rather than in small separate pieces, and where knowledge is required to be related to other knowledge rather dun learned in isolation. Interdisciplinary approaches also contribute to a well structured knowledge base.

The extent to which course design, teaching and assessment methods embody the four elements will determine whether they are likely to foster a deep approach. Problem-based learning, for example, embodies all four of these elements. Marked differences have been found in the extent of deep approaches to learning in a traditional medical school compared with a medical school using problem-based learning.

There are clear implications for all academic teachers in terms of designing courses, preparing tasks, reducing anxiety in assessment, and recognising and allowing for diversity of approaches among students.

Government Policy

Teaching More Students

As I have already indicated, many of the recent changes in UK universities have been driven by government policy, one based on a wish to see better value for public money. The sudden expansion in the early 90s, requiring larger student intakes, put considerable pressure on the academic community who had been accustomed to methods and practices that, though far from efficient, were familiar to both themselves and their students. The funding council quickly recognised that effective change is unlikely to take place through challenge alone: it must be accompanied by support. Accordingly it supported a training programme entitled 'Teaching More Students' for which the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development produced a set of eight booklets (see bibliography below). This programme enabled us – the trainers – to incorporate many of the principles of good teaching and learning that we had been promoting for many years and present them to an audience that was for a pleasant change a more compliant one.

Enterprise Skills

At about the same time the ten Conservative government decided to promote what they called 'Enterprise Skills' and invested £1m over a five-year period in each institution making a successful bid. Enterprise Skills soon became interpreted as 'Transferable Skills' and some 30 universities set about developing a range of skills and competencies in subject areas that had hitherto been largely content-based. A typical range of such skills would be:

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- Communication skills
  - Written reports
  - Presentations
  - Media
  - Posters
- Group work skills
  - Leadership
  - Chairing
  - Co-operation
- Information Technology skills
- Personal skills
  - Independence
  - Autonomy
  - Self-assessment
- Organisational skills
  - Time management
  - Project management
  - Objective setting
- Learning skills
  - Reading with purpose
  - Note-taking with purpose
  - Literature research and review
- Information skills
  - Finding sources
  - Evaluating sources
  - Interpreting data
- Financial skills
  - Costing
  - Budgeting
  - Obtaining funding
- Interpersonal skills
  - Assertiveness
  - Influencing
  - Negotiating
  - Giving and receiving feedback
- Problem solving
  - Problem analysis
  - Creative problem-solving
  - Decision making

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The original purpose was to produce graduates with a fuller and wider range of professional skills, but it soon became apparent that many of these skills were as relevant to the students' success at university as to their subsequent careers.

The arrival of transferable skills on the academic scene of course raised many questions such as:

- how can they be learned?
- how can we teach them?
- how do we assess them?
- how can they be monitored?
- how can they be developed in the context of academic courses?
- do we have to be able to demonstrate them ourselves?

and the answers to these questions have predictably promoted many changes in the delivery of courses throughout higher education, not the least of which is a more considered focus on the student as a whole person.

Quality Assessment

For the pas seven years the HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) has been undertaking an assessment of educational provision by subject area of all institutions which it funds. The assessments are conducted by peer review. The assessors are responsible for judging quality in relation to the subject provider's aims and objectives over six aspects of educational provision:

1. Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation
2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment
3. Student Progression and Achievement
4. Student Support and Guidance
5. Learning Resources
6. Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Each of these aspects is graded on a 1–4 point scale and a public report is issued following the assessment visit. A grade 1 in one or more aspects leads to reassessment within a year and funding is withdrawn in whole or in part if the subject area is judged unsatisfactory after re-assessment.

The purpose of the assessment visit is "to gather, consider and verify the evidence of the quality of education, in the light of the subject provider's aims and objectives in the specific subject and to achieve a *graded profile* of the quality of that provision". The assessment consists of:

- A *Self-Assessment* report from the subject provider which is an evaluation of the quality of the student learning experience and student achievement measured against the aims and objectives that the subject provider sets for the education of its students in that subject. The

self-assessment document is the primary guide for assessors in setting their priorities and planning their programme for the assessment.

- *Peer Review:* carried out by a team of registered and trained subject specialist review-ers drawn from other universities (peers from other universities with 3–4 days training).

During the visit, the assessment team

- *observes various forms of teaching and learning* (including direct observation of classroom seminar, workshop, tutorial, laboratory and placement situations as appropriate)
- inspects a sample of student work (exam scripts, coursework, projects and dissertations)
- meets with *academic, administrative and support staff as well as students, former students and employers* where appropriate
- Scrutinises *institutional and course documents,* reviews and reports including external examiners' reports
- reviews the available *student learning resources.*

Observing teaching

The assessors observe a carefully selected number of teaching sessions. They meet with the lecturer before to brief her or him, observe the session silently and unobtrusively, and meet again afterwards to review the session. Each lecturer is given a grade on the 1–4 scale (see below). The following checklist is used to inform the observation and the review discussion for lectures.

Sessions are graded on a scale 1–4 (1 lowest and 4 highest).

Grade 1 The session fails to make an acceptable contribution to the attainment of the learning objectives set.

Grade 2 The session makes acceptable contribution to the attainment of the learning objectives, but significant improvement could be made.

Grade 3 The session makes a substantial contribution to the attainment of the learning objectives, but there is scope for improvement.

Grade 4 The session makes a full contribution to the attainment of the learning objectives.

Assessors make an overall report on the strengths and weaknesses of observed activities. Typical assessor's comments are as follows:

The good…

- *clear aims and objectives, good planning and clear structure to the session*
- *classes characterised by enthusiastic and well-informed teaching, and consistently high quality of student contributions*
- *student contributions to discussions encouraged by tutors who provide a challenging but supportive environment*

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- *much of teaching imaginative, innovative and participative and well grounded in principles of adult learning*
- *some excellent lecturing, utilising both 'chalk and talk' and a range of audio-visual aids*
- *high levels of student interaction and participation in classes*

The not so good…

Some teaching found to be:

- *repetitive*
- *lacking inspiration*
- *failing to challenge students*
- *need to consider more carefully the role that students play in small groups.*

Examples of factors contributing to low student participation levels:

- *poor preparation by students*
- *poor pace and choice of materials*
- *the tendency of the teacher to dominate*
- *failure to engage or challenge students*

When they *meet with the students* the assessors are keen to gauge:

- students awareness of the subject provider's aims and objectives
- their experiences as learners in the subject
- their responses to the teaching provided
- their reviews on academic and pastoral support
- the arrangements made for student feedback and presentation, including whether or not students have been involved in preparation of the self-assessment document.

National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education

Among the many recommendations made by the committee, which reported in July 1997, were several radical proposals for the improvement of the quality of "learning and teaching" – they put the terms in that order! Perhaps the two most emphatic were the following:

- All lecturers to receive training in teaching, learning and assessment methods both initially and when they are more experienced

- An Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education to be established by end of 1998

Here are some quotations from the report:

"Academics are committed to keeping abreast of the latest research and ideas in their discipline but few of them have the opportunity to keep at the forefront of developments in how to teach their subject… only just half of the academics responding to the Inquiry have ever received any training on how to teach and over two thirds of those had received training only at the beginning of their careers."

"There was widespread recognition… that students need to be placed at the centre of the learning process, but less conviction that this is happening at the moment."

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"Although lectures still predominate, our research shows that over the last 5 years staff have been widening their repertoire of teaching methods."

"Individual higher education teachers are not well-informed about the effectiveness of different approaches to learning and teaching."

"Planning for learning means that designing the forms of instruction which support learning becomes as important as preparing the content of programmes."
"There are many teachers who are ready to adopt different methods of teaching as circumstances change, but others find change hard to accept and do not reflect much on their teaching or consider the basis of good teaching practice."

CHECKLIST FOR LECTURERS

Venue	seating, lighting, heating, ventilation etc.?
Content	content of lecture made clear to students?
Structure	organisation and lecture material well-organised?
Level	could students cope with the level of material?
Clarity	clear explanations?
Use of examples	relevant and helpful illustrations?
Handouts/materials	appropriate use of handouts/study materials?
Audio-visual aids	successful in supporting students' understanding?
Audibility	could the lecturer be heard and seen by all students?
Pace and timing	appropriately paced and to time?
Enthusiasm/interest	student interest sustained/enhanced?
Interaction	opportunities for questions etc.?

"An effective strategy will involve guiding and enabling students to be effective learners, to understand their own learning styles, and to manage their own learning."

"The skills of effective teachers will need to be valued through the rewards and career structure for academic staff."

"Roughly half the employers… were dissatisfied with the current level of skills exhibited by graduates… The largest single expression of dissatisfaction comes from the 25% who would like graduates to have better communication skills."

"HE institutions should ensure that assessment methods become a key part of the initial training and continuing professional development of teaching staff."

There is thus a widespread recognition that, although much is currently being done in the UK to upgrade the status and quality of teaching and learning, there is enormous room for improvement if we are to "encourage and enable all students – whether they demonstrate the

highest intellectual potential or whether they have struggled to reach the threshold of higher education – to achieve beyond their expectations."
Following this report another committee (Booth) was asked to "review current training and accreditation practice and the needs of staff engaged wholly or partly in the delivery of teaching and learning, taking account of the professional development and accreditation practices of other professions and other countries". They proposed a sequence of professional qualifications progressing from Associate Part 1 membership of the Institute of Learning and Teaching in HE for postgraduates who teach to Fellowship for experienced academic teachers as shown below:

Category or level of membership	Illustrative range of responsibility
1. Associate Part One	Classroom practice; marking; evaluation of teaching.
2. Associate Part Two	*In addition to the above:* Design of a module, unit or series of teaching sessions; design of assessment; evaluation of modules.
3. Member	*In addition to the above:* Curriculum/programme design (e.g. across a degree); improvement of curricula/programmes; innovation in own or course practice; evaluation of programmes; supervision of Associates.
4. Fellow	*In addition to the above:* Leader of change (across an institution or discipline) in teaching or curricula, through research, publication, work on disciplinary or professional bodies.

The government has in general supported the proposals although it has to be recognised that the academic world cannot easily be persuaded by reason and logic and in some cases seems to want to hold on to amateurish approaches to teaching and learning. There is currently much discussion on the effects that such emphases on learning and teaching will have on research, the freedom of academics to decide what is best for themselves, and the need for each institution to determine its own pathway in training.

It is said that organising academics is like trying to herd cats, but put a bowl of food down and watch them come running. The 'domesticated' ones are happy to be organised. It remains to be seen how tough the provider of food in this arena, the government, will be with the 'feral' ones.

Conclusion

In the 28 years since the first training unit for academic staff was set up in the University of London much wisdom and evidence has been accrued about the relationship between teaching and learning and much of this has been fed into the various processes that have culminated in the present climate of change in British universities. But the parallel demand for universities to be more accountable both for the government for the public funding they receive and to the fee-paying students (now able to make more informed choices) for the quality of their learning, has

led to a wind of change which may feel like the Mistral to some, but to me feels like a warm trade wind.

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Collaborative Learning in Work Groups: A Practical and Low Cost Response to a Dramatic Increase in Student Numbers

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ABSTRACT The University of Bergen, on the west coast of Norway, (17,500 students), has introduced
a method of collaborative learning in small work groups (10–15 students) to deal with a drastic increase in student numbers. Graduate students have been hired to work as group leaders.
The method has been running for six years. This paper deals with its development, operation and success.

The Crisis

Unfortunately our system of collaborative learning in work groups has arisen neither because of wide enthusiasm for new learning principles among the University teachers and administrators, nor as the University's response to research findings in cognitive or educational psychology, nor from a thorough understanding of epistemology. It primarily developed because the University of Bergen, like so many other western universities in the late 80´s and in the 90´s, had to solve an urgent problem: How to maintain a good quality education as student numbers rose (for us from 8,500 in 1987 to 17,500 in 1997), while the staff numbers stayed much the same. We had what became known as a "student explosion", and it led to large group lectures and next to no student – teacher interaction time at the undergraduate level. As a result, failure rates in exams, as well as the number of students who dropped out before ever taking any exams, rapidly increased. It was obvious that many students failed in their academic aspirations as well as suffering from a sense of alienation, and the University decided something had to be done.

The Assessment System

A very short note on the teaching and assessment system at the University of Bergen is needed before we take a closer look at the collaborative learning in work groups that developed as a response to the crisis.

By signing up for a course, the students are given the right to present themselves for the exam(s) at the end of the course, as well as participating in whatever teaching is offered in the course. Any course will have a reading list with books, articles or a compendium that will cover the course-topics and from which the exam questions will eventually be drawn. During the course the students are free to go about learning as they please, that is they can go to lectures,

seminars and other organised learning activities if they find them helpful, but they do not have to be present. Learning through reading is the dominant activity for most students. Written papers and other assignments are sometimes offered but are seldom mandatory, except from some laboratory work in the natural sciences. At the end of the course, the exams take the form of writing a paper or answering some questions individually in a classroom environment during one day, or in some cases writing an essay at home over a period of two weeks. The exams are assessed by a commission of at least two people, one having to be from outside the institution. While assessing the exam, the name of the student is not revealed to the commission. The only feedback the students get from the commission is the grade. The fact that our system focuses on exams rather than courses, on assessment rather than learning, seriously limits the kind of teaching a course will offer.

Collaborative Learning in Work Groups as a Response to the Crisis

At our University, the Natural Sciences have a long tradition of hiring graduate students and paying them to work as teacher assistants to help undergraduates with their laboratory work. Courses in the Natural Sciences usually demand that the students write a few obligatory lab-reports and hand them in to be approved, before they are permitted to take the exams. Students from other departments like Law, Social Sciences and Art seldom have labs, but they have a tradition of, on their own initiative, forming colloquia (study groups) to discuss their reading assignments and solve problems given in previous exams. The system of collaborative learning that developed as a response to the problems raised above, can be seen as a joining of these two traditions.

Money was made available to our University from Government funds in the early 1990´s, to have the departments hire graduate students as leaders for small work groups of 10–15 undergraduate students. The leaders were not hired to lecture; their job was more complex. They were to facilitate learning using different strategies (which I will return to in a moment), as well as helping the new students develop attitudes and skills needed to become successful "professional" students. The undergraduate students signing up for work groups would agree to meet on a regular basis with the group, normally for two hours a week throughout the semester. The work done in the work groups, and its learning outcome, were not evaluated as such, but were to become apparent in the students final exams.

Examples of Learning Activities in the Work Groups

Over the past years different departments have developed different kind of learning activities. Some departments provide a set of activities to do in the work groups and expect the leaders to more or less stick to the activities outlined. Other departments want their leaders to develop activities themselves and pay little notice to what goes on in the groups. Here are some examples of typical activities: Participants (1) have to read parts of the reading list and meet to present summaries and discuss; (2) are presented with a case study and try to relate it to theory and models through discussion; (3) write short papers, have the leader and fellow students read them, and receive feed-back; (4) solve problems using a specific method (e.g. in maths or computer science) individually, in pairs or small groups and present the solutions and receive feedback; (5) conduct some simple experiments or fieldwork followed by presentation and discussion to get

a better understanding of theories and models; (6) role-play situations followed by discussion; (7) go on short excursions to get first hand experiences, followed by discussion.
Of course, there is nothing groundbreaking or novel about any of these activities. They are all well known as effective learning strategies and have been in use for a long time. What is new to our University is to have created a structure where these strategies are systematically used, and the fact that graduate students are employed to work as leaders for these activities.

The Students

The University of Bergen is a medium-sized European research University. We have seven faculties, a staff of 2000 and a total of 17,500 students. 13,500 of them are in our undergraduate programmes for four years, 3000 are graduate students on two-year programmes, and 1000 are students working on their doctoral degree on four-year programmes. The work group structure operates among the 13,500 undergraduates, drawing its leaders from the 3000 graduate students. The doctoral degree students are not involved in the work groups.

The Cost

Each semester 150 or more leaders are employed for this system to operate among our 13,500 undergraduates. The leaders will work two hours a week with each group throughout the semester. Many leaders operate in two groups during the same semester. The salary is competitive with salaries students would get working part time elsewhere. Getting graduate students to work as work group leaders has not been a problem. The departments are responsible for hiring their leaders and paying their salary. The criteria for choosing among applicants vary between different departments. Departments also have the responsibility for developing the structure as well as the content of work groups. One full-time university lecturer (the writer of this paper), is devoted to the training of leaders and in assisting the departments in the development of work groups. This job is placed at *The Programme for Research on Learning and Instruction*, our University's staff development and educational research unit. The total cost of the work group structure is less than 0.2% of the University's annual budget.

Are the Leaders Competent to Lead?

Over the past six years I have been training nearly 800 leaders in groups of 10–20, through a two day workshop prior to their job, through a few short follow-up meetings as the job proceeds, and through a summary meeting at the end of the job where the leaders discuss their experiences, suggest changes and write a self-evaluation. Based on my experiences, I can only say: Yes, they are competent to lead. Many leaders have developed a creativity in facilitating learning, an insight into group-dynamics and a professionalism in leadership that future students or employees, it be in institutions or in business, will benefit from. The personal development and learning of the leaders, though not the major focus and main intention of this structure, has been rather extraordinary for some, very good for many and only poor or negative for very few. Perhaps the biggest challenge has been for the leaders to develop an understanding of what

makes the difference between a lecturer and a facilitator, and to develop skills and confidence in how to facilitate.

The two-day workshop I conduct prior to the job is filled with practical exercises, and aims to prepare them for the role of a facilitator. I do this partly by role-modelling a facilitator myself, which is necessary because for several leaders this is their first workshop experience. The students also have to come to an understanding of what a work group is and how it operates, and develop trust and courage to fully participate. Sometimes this fails and the leader end up lecturing and the work group become an ordinary classroom.

The work group structure has now been operating for a while, and we now get the second generation of leaders who have been participating in work groups themselves as undergraduates. The character of the work groups is thus better understood by the leaders. The secondary school system has also recently changed towards more project work in groups, and new students are thus more prepared for studying in work groups. On the other hand, the activities the different departments conduct are about to become tradition, and the first exploratory and experimental period of the work groups are about to come to an end.

Does it work?

In order to obtain some quantitative measures of success or failure, we have investigated how many students sign up for and take advantage of the work groups to see if they end up with better grades on exams than the students that do not take part. Participation rates vary with different subjects, from nearly 100% throughout the semester in some, to 50% at the beginning of the semester falling to 25% at the end of the semester in others. Reasons for the variation have not been investigated. The results show that participators experience less drop-out before exams and make somewhat better exams than non-participators. A criticism of these studies is that non-participators may very well be less motivated and taking their studies less seriously than participators, and that this accounts for the difference in results as much as the learning outcomes of participation. Nevertheless, we may surmise that signing up for and participating in work groups will have a positive effect on motivation, study habits and learning outcomes, and thus help students work effectively and make them well prepared for exams.

Questionnaires are normally distributed to students at the end of the semester (before exams) for the purpose of getting feedback on what can be improved in the teaching offered. Though not asked to compare the learning outcomes of the different organised teaching, we can report that many students rate participation in work groups as a better way of learning than going to lectures. A criticism of these ratings is that such a comparison is misplaced. In designing the work groups we intended them to work together with readings and large group lectures to reinforce the total learning outcomes, and we believe this is how they work. We do not see different learning activities as competing. We are aware however, that students sometimes do this because they must choose how to best spend their time studying.

Finally, one last measure of effectiveness is the fact that students have protested highly against resent attempts to reduce the work group structure, put forward by the University to meet cuts in budgets. We are in the middle of this discussion right now and have yet to see the outcome.

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Conclusion

The development of a structure of collaborative learning in working groups has been a new addition to the ways we organise learning at our University. It has proven popular and rewarding to the participators, helping them in their academic achievements. In providing a platform for social interaction and friendship during undergraduate study the work groups have served as a necessary addition to large group lectures and individual study of literature and text books in a time of massive increase in student numbers. The nearly 1000 graduate students who have worked as group leaders have had an important and rewarding learning experience, as well as a popular well paid job.

We have been asking the leaders to write, at the end of their job, a short paper on an incident that happened in their work group for the benefit of future leaders. I would like to end this paper by providing two examples.

Story 1 – from the Department of Social Anthropology

"It was the first real meeting after the first one where we just had got to know each other a bit. I had given two pairs of students the assignment of giving a presentation of two articles for this meeting. The first time they do this is exciting because it sets a kind of atmosphere for how the group will co-operate throughout the semester. One of the articles was an older one on the *Yir Yoront* people of Australia and their "meeting" with white man. The pair who received this article as their assignment told us they had spent a great deal of time discussing the article, and that they were uncertain about how to structure their presentation. But they had a suggestion, and asked if the group would try it out. They divided the group into two subgroups and had one group remain in the room while the rest of us had to leave for the hallway. I, as the group leader, was then taken aside and given an axe made of papermaché while they explained that I was to be the white man and my mission was to make sure the others accepted the axe as a gift. The rest of the hallway group were then divided into three subgroups with status as *young men, women, and old men* – Yir Yoront groups represented in the article. As white man I was not to know who had what status but had to find out through the role-play. The group remaining in the room were told to be anthropologists and observe critically what was going on in the role-play. Digging into this simple and exciting idea, everyone played their role as best as they could. As white man I experienced great difficulties getting anybody to accept the axe. This role-play illustrated and made real what might have happened, and the observers tried as hard as I to figure out who of the Yir Yoronts had what status. After the role-play the whole group had a very good discussion on field methods in social anthropology. We also talked about how to study "cultures" when meeting "the others" will influence and change the way we live.

As a leader I was extremely pleased with my group. Imagine having students with the imagination and courage to do something like this on the first meeting. Talk about "embodiment"!....."

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Story 2 – from the Department of Administration and Organisational Theory

"One day a participant came to the meeting with a very serious look on her face. I noticed this because she usually was a relaxed and cheerful person. She came unprepared for the meeting and had been absent on the two or three previous meetings. She looked so worried that I decided to talk to her in private during the brake. Talking to her, she told me she was planning to quit her studies, saying this with tears in her eyes. I asked whether she did not enjoy the subject or did not believe it was fit for her? Her reason proved to be that for three weeks she had not been able to study due to taking care of her three children who had been sick. Her husband had been away during this period, and now she didn't believe herself able to catch up on what the others had read. I spent a long time explaining to her that many students stay away for some weeks during the semester, being busy somewhere else. I told her not to get panicky because she had responsibilities at home. Even though some students spend all day at the university, the actual and efficient time they spend studying might be less than what she does. I also told her my own story of wanting to give up before an exam because I had believed myself to be ill prepared. My group leader had told me to go for it and regard it as training. I did and got "laud" (A) . I advised her to give it a try and not to worry in advance.

After the meeting this lady shined like the sun and got more involved in her studies than most of her classmates. This was my most important act as a group leader. She could never have received that kind of encouragement from a book."

How to Innovate the Basic Mathematics Curriculum

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ABSTRACT This paper points to the importance of mathematics for everyday life and presents mathematics as a school subject. The paper explores the basic problem for the continuous improvement of mathematics teaching and the importance of collaboration between different universities for future teachers.

Introduction

"*The test of successful education is not the amount of knowledge*
a pupil takes away from school, but his appetite to know and capacity to learn."
(Livingstone)

We want to change and complete this sentence a little:
The test of successful education of *future teachers* is not the amount of knowledge *a student* takes away form school, but *his appetite to teach* and *capacity to continue learning*.

There is no doubt that mathematics has come to be regarded from several points of view:
- as an *international language of understanding* – a means of communication and description used by economist, geographers, businessman and others;
- as a *training ground* in which extra-mathematical educational objectives can be attained;
- as a *tool* whose value increases rapidly over the years;
- as a *subject* worthy of study for its own sake, capable of giving pleasure and creating interest.

Designing the Curriculum

When designing a curriculum for every type of school, it will be necessary to decide what weight we wish to give to each of these objectives at any time and, indeed, how we are to interpret the words "language", "training ground", "tool" and "subject". All of them must be in the curricula for future mathematics teachers. It is worth drawing attention to the essential difference between the "training ground" aim and the others. Our primary concern should be the improvement of the overall education of the student – the teacher's job is to educate and not merely to instruct.

Every curricula for mathematics should reflect the way in which mathematics education is generally perceived in a country. It is not only a list of mathematical topics. It must be also concerned with the learning of mathematics. Some of the reasons we have to learn and teach mathematics are: we use it in everyday life; it can be enjoyable; it has its own value as a subject in its own right; and it has a lot of applications to other subjects. We can look to mathematics also through its aims, such as:
- developing reasoning powers: observation, analysis, deductive thought;
- stimulating the imagination;

- promoting the habit of clear expression both written and oral (or we can say that one aim of learning mathematics is to help students to use normal language precisely);
- stressing the qualities of proceeding methodically and with care.

Deep political and economic changes in Slovakia after 1989 have also influenced the whole system of education. Among other things, there has been innovation in the content of subjects taught in primary and secondary schools. We at the Department of Mathematics of the University of Constantine The Philosopher have changed the mathematics curricula for future mathematics teachers according to the challenges encountered in practice.

The second part of our new curriculum is concentrated on facultative (elective) topics and on the didactics of mathematics and a very important part of this time of study is spent practising in schools. Every student can choose from the list of facultative subjects some topics according his interest in mathematics or the topic which concern to his diploma work.

The didactic of mathematics is understood as the theory, methodology and the practise of educational processes in teaching school mathematics. It is a scientific discipline exploring laws in teaching mathematics in compliance with the defined teaching aims of the society. Contents, means, methods and forms of teaching and learning mathematics constitute its aims. The didactics of mathematics follow from general aims of teaching and education which are elaborated in pedagogy and psychology and from the features of mathematics, its tasks and place within present day science, technology and economy.

The basic problems for the continuous improvement of mathematics teaching are:

- the mastery the basic knowledge of mathematics in the modern understanding of the term by pupils;
- gaining and development of skills in the use of mathematical methods and of information and how these methods are utilised in other fields, especially in the natural sciences and technology and their gradual application to the humanities;
- the formation of logical thinking and development of abilities to define thoughts accurately by mean of mathematical notions and symbols.

At present our work place concentrates its scientific-research activity on the solution of the following problems:

- to define the basic curriculum in school mathematics within the structure of the present school system on the basis of a scientific analysis of the present state of school mathematics and trends in foreign countries;
- to concentrate on the revaluation of notion formative processes in mathematics teaching at all types of schools;
- to re-evaluate inter-subject relationships and their effect on the selection of the basic and extended curriculum;
- to solve the problem as an integrating moment within the didactics of science subjects;
- to deepen the education of young scientific-pedagogical workers in the didactics of mathematics.

As one of the results of this type of work we want to present the new textbook of mathematics for the 5th grade of primary school, which was written by teachers of our department and is one of two alternative textbooks of mathematics for primary schools in Slovakia.

Another problem which is of concern to every problem in didactic mathematics and the mathematics curriculum generally is the problem of commercial schools (a kind of secondary school) which are much more popular then even before. An indispensable part of the curriculum at this type of school are specific parts of mathematics – financial mathematics, insurance mathematics, economic computations, statistics. Moreover, the elements of financial mathematics have been implemented into curricula of mathematics at primary schools and various types of secondary schools.

We are preparing for participation in the Tempus project with the following results:

- a new compulsory course which will correspond to the innovations of curricula in mathematics from the point of view of elements of financial mathematics;
- a new optional course for those students who intend to be better qualified for teaching mathematics at Commercial academies and other secondary schools of "economics type"
- restructuring of those courses like the courses of mathematical statistics or numerical mathematics with emphasis upon the use of computers.

The last problem in innovating the basic mathematics curriculum is the problem of using computers in teaching mathematics. We want to solve the following problems:

- How can the mathematics teacher use the computer in his lessons?
- Is it necessary for him to know programming in some programme language or is it enough if he is only a user?

The importance of collaboration among other universities for future teachers

The transformation of the educational system at universities in the Slovak Republic is lagging behind the transformation process in economics. The system of education at most universities is still more or less rigid, which neither allows for student mobility between universities in Slovakia, nor enables mobility from Slovakia abroad, and vice versa. But in particular cases it is possible.

Our department has had long years of collaboration with the Teacher Training College in Szeged. This collaboration allows our students to study mathematics at this college for one term (semester) during their five-year study program. This option is available to students who will teach in Hungarian in primary and secondary schools in Slovakia. It is without doubt that this form of student mobility would be very useful for our other students too, especially if this activity would be held in some countries of the European Union.

We face the challenge of preparing fundamental changes in the system of education (not only in the mathematics curricula) to allow close cooperation and synergy between Slovak and EU universities. It is necessary for the gradual integration into the open European area of higher education.

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International Exchange Study Visits and their Place in Teacher Training and Implementingthe Idea of a European Dimension in Education

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ABSTRACT This paper deals with the problem of how to improve teacher education. Teacher education programmes have to reflect all the changes in Europe. Study exchange visits abroad are considered to be one way of innovating. Exchange visits have multifaceted benefits for everybody involved. The author expresses personal experience from this field of educational work.

"*It' s needful that all nations should devote their powers to the common good, that they should seek peace and truth and sow love among their neighbours*."
J. A. Comenius

Introduction

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Coming from a country where the educational system is strongly influenced by J. A. Comenius, the paper starts with a quotation from his outstanding work. Comenius looked with love to the succeeding generations of all countries and it is a deep truth that his compassionate voice addresses with authority to the entire modern world.

The education and socialization of the younger generation in Europe today is influenced by rapid changes, especially in the so-called post-socialist countries. New conditions for the creation of a cooperative atmosphere among countries can be observed, and there is clearly a need to teach children to learn to live together. Comparing European reality today to the reality some years ago, we have to state that it is undoubtably different in many aspects.

Europe today plays several important roles in the spheres of economy, bio-ecology, science, as well as in such social sciences as pedagogy, psychology, ethics and aesthetics. Each branch of them has its own specific educational dimension.[1] A new rank of life in Europe and co-existence among nations has awakened the need to define the European teacher and his role on the European continent. Teachers are expected to educate young people in a such way that students should be able to:

- reflect all challanges in European society today and tomorrow;
- study all over Europe (students mobility);
- work and live everyday life in a democratic, multilingual and multicultural Europe;
- and understand their responsibility for future life in Europe.

The Role of Exchange Study Visits in Teacher Training

Nowadays, teachers are working under circumstances and conditions which result from the above-mentioned facts. There exists on-going professional debates about the aims, structure, content and process of education and the professional development of teachers. There doesn' t exist a single model of initial teacher education in Europe which could be acceptable as the unique one. On the other hand, there exists an agreement among experts that the traditional system of acquiring pedagogical knowledge and professional competence is not sufficient. Beyond doubt, the major area of debate is concentrated on the problems: who is a good teacher; how to link educational theory with the practice of prospective teacher training; how to select facts which indeed play a central and dominant role in professional development; and also - what should be considered a first step - how to select and attract the best young people into the teaching profession.

Due to the fact that there is a necessity to educate teachers and teacher-students for cooperation and understanding in a multicultural Europe, we agree with all educational experts, who stress that theoretical knowledge about European countries is not the core of teacher-training programmes.

Having been involved in the organization of foreign students study exchange visits for several years, we would like to stress that student experience in a foreign country is one of the ways of acquiring relevant knowledge and competence. Travel is an important part of teachers experience and it can be regarded as one aspect of professional behavior. Visitng a foreign country is a learning action that can contribute to the development of students by providing

them a lot of opportunities to get acquainted with life and culture, history, language, social and professional habits and so on. No books are not as important as firsthand experiences in this field.

So, having in mind the rapidly changing world and the on-going educational reforms and innovations in teacher education, we should place a high value on teacher-student and teacher-teacher mobility in Europe. The situation in Europe and in the world today and tomorrow indicates that future teachers will be expected to have personal qualities such as tolerance, solidarity and mutual understanding, the ability to work in international teams, partnership and professional cooperation on an international level, strong will, and an interest in learning foreign languages.

Foreign Exchange Study Visits between Nitra and Leuven

Sometimes those who are not involved in the organization of exchange visits consider visits to be a sort of holiday or relaxation. But, being once involved and being fully responsible for this area of educational work, one can confirm that it's really hard work. Especially if you feel a responsibility for gaining multiple benefits from this work.
In the process of improving elementary teacher education at our department, we have been joining in some international activities within our institution for several years. Of a special educational value are considered to be short term (1 week) exchange study visits of students and teachers based on bilateral agreement and reciprocal principles between Nitra (Slovakia) and Leuven (Belgium). This project started in 1995, and today, all teachers and students who were involved have been enriched by the experience from six exchange study visits.

The original purpose of the project was aimed exclusively at comparative pedagogical issues (to compare Slovak and Belgian school systems with a special focus on elementary grades and the comparison of teacher education). Working together with Belgian colleagues, we soon realised that the Project had a lot of potential and that we were highly motivated to do for students and ourselves as much as possible. Having finished the first round, we decided to organize exchanges enriched by activities which would be of high benefit to everybody involved. Now there are three areas of interest:

1. Professional area:

- visiting schools, observing teaching process, educational reality and school environment;
- teaching practice assistanceship
- taking part in educational activities in elementary classes and university lectures;
- presenting concurent lectures and seminars for students and teachers(given by Slovak and Belgian teachers);
- visiting libraries and resource rooms;
- meeting official representatives of educational institutions.

2. Cultural area:

- visiting sights and areas of natural beauty;
- organizing events with national folk culture presentations;

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- observing lifestyle and habits.

3. Personal area:

- living with host families gives students opportunity for making new friends, crosscultural communication and empathy;
- language improvement.

While preparing for an exchange (with only slight differences whether you are in the role of a guest or of a hosting person) it is necessary to bear in mind three sequentional steps as they are presented in table No. 1. According to our recent experience we are sure that there exist at least such benefits as are shown in the table No. 2.

Table No. 1

Sequentional steps in preparing exchange visits

1. Planing	2. Implementation	3. Reflection

Table No. 2

Benefits of the exchange visits

Conclusion

During recent years theories about „burn-out syndrome" have occured in the teaching profession. To be involved in organizing of study exchange visits can help to prevent this syndrome. Once you have started with this work, you are always occupied with interesting and

creative work, there is still something you are looking forward to. Being totally exhausted after an exchange visit, the highest reward for you is "THANK YOU" on the lips of your own and foreign students and teachers.

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The Internet and Higher Education

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ABSTRACT This paper outlines different ways in which the Internet can be used as a resource for classroom teaching and as an alternative to the conventional classroom. The advantages of the Internet as an educational resource, as well as the drawbacks involved in abandoning the 'true classroom' are also considered.

Introduction

Any conference on "The Role of Innovation" in Teaching Strategies in Higher Education cannot ignore the place of high technology. While one could well argue that, to this point, high technology has far from lived up to the promises made, it is possible that, for better or worse, nothing in the next few years will have as great an impact on education (at all levels) than the computer in general and the Internet in particular. In general, there are two major ways in which computers, particularly the World Wide Web (WWW), have been utilized in higher education. One has been as an adjunct to regular classroom teaching; the other has been as a substitute, albeit imperfect, for classroom teaching. It is worthwhile to look at each of these in turn.

The Internet and Classroom Teaching

As far as resources on the WWW to aid in classroom teaching are concerned, there is an absolute wealth of material available today, most of it free. Generally, the material is easy to find, using any of the well-known "search engines," and is easily accessed by students with a machine with a "web browser." It is available in all levels of complexity, ranging from grade school to post-graduate, and in many forms. Virtually every major government agency (e.g., the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Economic Analysis) now maintains its database on the Web. It is possible to do a great deal of research today, literally without leaving one's home or office. There are articles, current as well as past, from books, periodi-cals and professional journals. To a great degree, the "reserved reading" sections of academic libraries have become obsolete. Finally, there are all manner of exercises available, running the gamut from self-graded quizzes, games and simulations (e.g., "Balance the Federal Budget"), to tutorials on a wide variety of subjects. The Appendix to this paper contains a number of hard-copy examples, including URL's (Internet addresses). While the examples all are in the area of Economics, much the same is available in most fields of study.

A more recent use of the Web is as the classroom itself. In the United States today, courses (indeed, entire degree programs) are available entirely on the Web. Again, this takes many forms. Regis University in Denver, Colorado, has an External MBA Program which offers an MBA degree without requiring that students ever set foot on campus. This program combines well-established low-tech distance learning techniques with up-to-date use of the Internet. Students receive a textbook and a set of video tapes of the lectures on the material covered. All contact with the instructor, however, is over the Internet, through either "bulletin boards" or private e-mail.

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The newer use, turning up almost on a daily basis, is courses "taught" entirely on the Web. Generally, there is a textbook, but course notes are delivered over the Web and even exams are administered in this medium. This is becoming easier and easier to do. Software for creating these courses, which can be used by persons with no knowledge of programming or HTML (the Web's computer language), is now readily available. One such program is WebCT, some hardcopy examples of which appear in the Appendix. In addition, companies are emerging to create these courses for colleges and universities on an outsourcing basis. Not only will these companies do the initial course development, their services include course management and hardware/software maintenance.

While this does, indeed, appear to the "wave of the future" – at this point in time, it would seem that the only question is *when* the market will be fully saturated – it is certainly open to question as to whether this is necessarily an unmitigated good thing for education. Here again, the two uses of the Web should be approached separately.

Educational Resources on the Web

With respect to using WWW resources as an aid in conventional classroom teaching, it is difficult to find a downside. Clearly, not all resources fit equally well with each course and each instructor, but in a sense, that's the beauty of the Web. There is a plethora of possibilities out there and one can pick and choose those that are appropriate, And they can be used at different times by different students – everyone need not be on the same schedule. Cost is certainly a factor which must be considered. It's true that hardware and software prices are declining rapidly, but the corollary is that obsolescence is increasing at the same rate. But it does appear that educational institutions are managing to adjust to this environment. Further, anyone in education is well aware of the rapid upward spiral in the prices of printed material as well.

Another issue which is often brought up is the dubious reliability of the information on the Web. It is pointed out that, unlike printed publications which are edited, nearly anybody can put anything on the Internet, and much of what one finds there is of little value. This is true, but the case may well be overstated. Even with printed material, the "filtering" often leaves a great deal to be desired. Over time, one has learned that one must judge the source, some of which are far more trustworthy and respected than others. It is likely that a similar process will take place with the Internet.

Greater Access versus the 'True' Classroom

The issues concerning the use of the Web <u>as</u> the classroom are more problematic and open to question. With all the considerable long-standing and ongoing debate in the field of education, there seems to be a great deal of agreement that the "classroom experience" (be it lecture or more interactive) is something of high value to be preserved. Granted, this may be no more than a reflection of an innate conservatism in education, but there also seems to be some evidence to support it. Further confirmation of this (anecdotally) is that it seems to be the case that a major goal of those creating Web-based courses is to "simulate the classroom experience" as closely as possible. For example, many courses include bulletin boards and "real-time chat rooms" which

allow students to "converse" with each other and the instructor. That is, most professionals don't want to *replace* the classroom, but rather, move it to another level. The questions of course are: How close can one come? How much is lost?

There also seems to be general agreement that the one unmitigated benefit of Web-based courses is access. Higher education can now be made available to those who, until now, have been denied, whether for reasons of physical handicap, remote location, or inconvenient timing. Distance learning has been around for some time; the Web greatly extends its reach. This is particularly important in an era of lifelong learning as a response to rapid change.

What is the tradeoff, on balance? Does the gain in access more than compensate for what is given up in losing the "true" classroom? For those who would not have access in any other way, the answer is probably clear. But professionals in the field of education have a responsibility to maintain a high degree of integrity on their "product," even, one might argue, if the result is to make the product unavailable to some segment of the population. Is it possible that the educational experience is being so degraded that the loss outweighs the gain? These are difficult questions, not easily measured, but they must be kept in mind and continually evaluated. Otherwise, opportunities may be missed, but worse, one of society's most valuable institutions may be imperilled.