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**Curriculum and Learning Modalities in Higher Education**

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## **Editorial**

### **Curriculum and Learning Modalities in Higher Education**

Higher Education is currently facing a number of challenges and shifts related to the evolution of curriculum and learning modalities. Shifts are taking place in various areas and developments are at different stages across Europe and subject areas.

At the most recent Ministerial Meeting in London, ministers stressed in their communique', entitled "Toward the European Higher Education Area: Responding to Challenges in a Globalised World", that they "underline the importance of curricula reform leading to qualifications better suited both to the needs of the labour market and to further study".

The current issue of Higher Education in Europe presents a collection of articles on selected issues around this topic.

One of the most prominent of these topics is the discussion of new developments related to learning and its outcomes is the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), developed in the context of the Bologna Process and its implications for students. The importance and relevance of ECTS has already been mentioned in the Berlin Communique' (2003), the Communique' of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education:

Ministers stress the important role played by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in facilitating student mobility and international curriculum development. They note that ECTS is increasingly becoming a generalized basis for the national credit systems. They encourage further progress with the goal that the ECTS becomes not only a transfer but also an accumulation system, to be applied consistently as it develops within the emerging European Higher Education Area.

And the above-mentioned London Communique' (2007) states:

Efforts should concentrate in future on removing barriers to access and progression between cycles and on proper implementation of ECTS based on learning outcomes and student workload.

This issue presents two articles on this topic, a theoretical approach by Löfgren and a critique by Grosge and Barchiesi.

These current challenges and developments in higher education include ICTs and their implications for teaching and learning, and new approaches to group work and related benefits for the acquisition of knowledge, both for subject matter and for learning skills (Hassanien). An evaluation of different aspects of learning and teaching is given by Postholm in her experimental study on group work as a teaching style at a Higher Norwegian institution, while Pekić Quarrie explores opportunities for students via peer reviews through working in a group context at Serbia's Belgrade University.

New approaches to learning through information technology are addressed by Barajas and Gannaway in their article on the challenges and issues related to the implementation of e-learning at an institutional level, using the University of Barcelona as an example. Another major shift is occurring in the technological resources used by students, which Ricoy and Pino address.

An emerging issue in the context of curriculum development in a European context is the European Framework of Languages as a cross-curricular strategy; Úbeda Mansilla and Roldán Riejos give an overview of its development and its application.

Lifelong Learning and its development in a higher education context is an important issue within the Bologna Process, due to the observation that “systematic development of flexible learning paths to support lifelong learning is at an early stage” (London Communique’ , 2007). Catering for “older students” is another emerging topic related to curriculum and lifelong learning, including the concept of the “Third Age University”, the challenges of which Lemieux, Boutin, and Riendeau address.

Going beyond the selective examples above, this issue gives a glimpse of the variety of topics and challenges in the area of curriculum and learning modalities today, illustrated with many concrete examples and case studies, valid for universities across Europe and possibly beyond.