WeReLaTe

Centralised Support for Writing, Research, Learning and Teaching:

Case Studies of Existing Models
across Europe

WRITING RESEARCH LEARNING TEACHING

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Djuddah Leijen

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COST Action 15221 has at its core the development of conversations and research around the shared territory of support for, and development of, writing, research, learning and teaching. Throughout the Action, Short-term Scientific Missions (STSMs) and other networking tools provided opportunities for dialogue and research across participating institutions, which illuminated intersections across European institutions and contributed to institutional transformation based on shared experiences. Informed by this dialogue and the experience of participating in the Action, the case studies herein present an overview of the centralised supports for writing, research, learning and teaching at their respective institutions, focusing on the purposes, processes, knowledge and scholarship, skills, and values which drive the ethos and mission of the centralised supports. The case studies examine the interoperability and synergies across the four key centralised supports for writing, research, learning and teaching at each institution, commenting on the effectiveness, efficiency and complementarity of these centralised supports and considering the opportunities and challenges associated with the model present at each institution.

This collection of case studies provides a rich overview of the models of centralised supports in writing, research, learning and teaching in place across the COST Action. It should be noted that, as the case studies are an interpretation of the institutional models through an individual lens, the case studies represent the author's/authors' own understanding of the model and not that of the institution.

OVERVIEW OF THE ACTION

As noted on its website, www.werelate.eu, COST Action 15221, We ReLaTe 'addresses the challenge of creating synergy among the increasingly more specialised and centralised supports for four key higher education activities – research, writing, teaching and learning – which frequently fail to capitalise on their shared territories and common ground'. The Action's description draws on the rationale for the work which was driven by a belief that in many institutions, central support for writing and research, learning and teaching continues to grow, 'repeatedly in a reactive rather than strategic manner, in the form of sometimes overlapping programmes or activities, centres, institutes and other units'. The Action aimed to 'address the dearth of professional conversations and research around the shared territory of support for, and development of, these four areas' in order to 'illuminate intersections and contribute to institutional transformation based on complementary, coherent and integrated provision'.

RATIONALE FOR THE CASE STUDIES PUBLICATION

One of the research objectives for COST Action 15221, We ReLaTe was to co-ordinate the identification of existing centralised models which aim to support writing, research, learning and teaching in higher education, with particular regard to their place institutionally and their existing interconnectedness/interoperability. Put simply, we wanted to find out what sort of centralised supports for writing and research, learning and teaching existed across the partner institutions. We agreed on two approaches to address this question. The first was a short questionnaire with Action Management Committee (MC) partners. The second was this collection of case studies. As the latter was inspired and underpinned by the former we present a short account and a table of the findings of the MC questionnaire here. Readers interested in a more comprehensive offering are directed to Farrell (2018).

EXISTING MODELS OF SUPPORT – MC QUESTIONNAIRE

Between 15th January and the 7th February 2018, Management Committee members of COST Action 15221, *WeReLaTe: Advancing effective institutional models towards cohesive teaching, learning, research and writing development,* were surveyed in order to identity existing centralised models which aim to support teaching, learning, research and writing in higher education. 'Centralised' was defined as 'an office or centre, which is managed by dedicated staff, whose primary role is to provide institution-wide support for the four key activities'.

There were 42 responses to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire found

- that almost half of the institutions have centralised support for teaching, learning and research;
- that approximately a quarter have no centralised support for teaching, learning and research;
- that the remaining quarter describe the situation as unsure or difficult to describe; and
- that the situation is markedly different with regards support for writing where only 14% of the MC institutions have centralised support, 57% do not have centralised support, and 28% declare the situation unsure or difficult to describe.

Centralised support for teaching

26%
26%
48%

Agree - there is centralised support for teaching
Disagree - there is no centralised support for teaching
Unsure - difficult to describe the situation

Centralised support for learning

29%
45%
26%

Agree - there is centralised support for learning
Disagree - there is no centralised support for learning
Unsure - difficult to describe the situation

Centralised support for writing

29%
14%
57%

Agree - there is centralised support for writing
Disagree - there is no centralised support for writing
Unsure - difficult to describe the situation

Centralised support for research

24%
48%
29%

Agree - there is centralised support for research
Disagree - there is no centralised support for research
Unsure - difficult to describe the situation

Initial analysis of the qualitative data from the open text answers in the survey suggested, as noted in Farrell (2018):

- 'that various centralized shapes/models exist and that within these practical support is enacted in a range of ways
- that equally there is variety in terms of the personnel involved in sponsoring, providing and receiving support
- that one of the valuable characteristics at the core of this work, across the four areas, is the notion of a learning community
- that there may be benefits to blurring the lines between support across the four areas and, indeed, of blurring the lines between the four areas themselves
  that one cannot ignore the influencers of support whether these are systems, strategies, agendas or key actors
- that there is some commonality in terms of the values that are cited as underpinning this work which include ethics, quality, diversity, collaboration and collegiality
- that in turn these values are layered upon by institutional purposes, which revolve around the pursuit of knowledge and the sharing of that knowledge towards the greater public, and often private, good
- that this work does not exist in a vacuum but that it is influenced by bigger ideas such neoliberalism, the ubiquitous nature of technology, globalization, the move to more homogeneity and uniformity across institutions etc.' (2018:2).

The findings were also organised in a matrix - link here.

EXISTING MODELS OF SUPPORT – CASE STUDIES

Two important broader key outcomes emerging from the MC questionnaire (Farrell, 2008) highlighted the need for a more comprehensive data gathering exercise, namely:

- 'that the data gathering served as an excellent scoping exercise with regards existing models of support across the four areas of writing, research, learning and teaching. […] one key outcome is the need for more comprehensive data gathering in the form of case studies which could be collated into a collection which would provide a snapshot of current provision and interoperability of centralized support in MC member institutions across the Action's countries;
- there is an outstanding need to capture the values, purposes, processes, and knowledge and skills which inform existing models".

(Farrell, 2018)

Consequently, the second agreed way of gathering data around existing models of support was the compilation of institutional case studies. As noted previously, in this COST Action, we are seeking to learn from existing success that is conspicuous at individual level and is demonstrated by key informants or stellar colleagues. In keeping with this intention, we agreed to publish this book of case studies, which captures the existing models of support across some of our partner institutions, where the case studies explore institutional models through an individual lens predominantly. We agreed a template for the case studies that all contributors followed. Colleagues had the opportunity to have early drafts of the case studies peer reviewed at a pre-conference workshop for the EATAW Conference hosted by Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg in July 2019. In addition, as a result of that conference, further guidance was shared with contributors who were asked to submit a final version of their case study for peer review in February 2020. In tandem, an editorial board was established and members of the Management Committee agreed to be peer reviewers. Following a formative process between authors and peer-reviewers, final drafts were submitted in May 2020.

The outcome of all of that work is this collection of 11 case studies which have been contributed by colleagues from across European institutions. In some instances, the case studies draw comparisons across institutions involved in the Short-term Scientific Mission or present a snapshot of the supports in place in a particular region/country. We acknowledge one further case study by one of our Action colleagues, Yulia Stukalina, which arose as a result of a STSM and is published elsewhere.[2]

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CASE STUDY OF EXISTING MODELS OF CENTRALISED SUPPORT FOR WRITING, RESEARCH, LEARNING AND TEACHING IN MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY (IRELAND).

INTRODUCTION

In this case study, we describe, and critically examine, the current centralised support for writing, research, learning and teaching in Maynooth University (Ireland). The case study is informed by national policies (for example Hunt, 2011), University documentation that describes the current supports, and a dedicated professional conversation with staff from across the supports. It seeks to provide an overview of the supports including their placement within university structures, the size and declared remit (or mission) of each support unit, the type and range of offerings they provide to colleagues, the perceptions of the supports, the interoperability across units, and the ways in which each communicates and collaborates with staff. We have tried to convey the key functions of each support within the confines of the scope of this case study, however, full details of them are available through the relevant websites noted at the end. In addition to describing the supports we have used the Farrell and Meyhöfer matrix (2018) of existing and desirable models to interrogate our own provision and to begin to discern how the institution compares with others in the sector. We conclude the case study with a discussion of the opportunities and challenges associated with the current provision, with a view to suggesting how support units might work differently and/or more collaboratively in order to provide a more effective model.

PROFILE OF THE INSTITUTION

Maynooth University is located 25 kilometres west of Dublin, Ireland. It is one of four constituent universities of the National University of Ireland (NUI). The University traces its origins to the foundation of the Royal College of St. Patrick which opened in 1795. Today, it continues to share a campus with the Pontifical University and National Seminary, also known as Maynooth College.

Maynooth University has approximately 13,000 students and 1,000 staff. It offers a range of programmes at undergraduate, Master's and PhD level in the humanities, science and engineering, and social sciences (including business, law, and education) and is a public research university.

The University is situated in the town of Maynooth, in Co. Kildare, which is Ireland's only university town. The University is divided physically into two campuses: 'north' campus and 'south' campus. The north, which is the more recently developed, was established on a green-field site and is where most of the new building has occurred; the majority of newer teaching, learning and research buildings are located here, as well as a large restaurant, a sports building, several playing pitches, student residences and student support units and offices. The south side of the campus, in contrast, has magnificent old buildings, some of architectural significance. It has a walled garden, an orchard, an apiary, several mature tree-lined avenues, ivy-covered walls and courtyards. It is picturesque and stunningly beautiful throughout the year. The university as a whole presents a blend of the old and the new, and is, simultaneously, Ireland's youngest university and one of its oldest educational institutions.

The rural situation, albeit close to the capital city, Dublin, is reflected particularly in the undergraduate population, many of whom come from the town's hinterland of surrounding counties. Maynooth University has a recognised strong tradition with regards to access and has relatively high percentages of mature students and students from non-traditional backgrounds. As noted in its strategic plan 'MU is a dynamic, rapidly-growing and innovative institution … where staff and students can flourish, and there are manifold opportunities for interdisciplinary encounter, dialogue and learning' (Maynooth University, 2018: 6).

The University declares its purpose as 'a public research university dedicated to people, ideas and culture, a scholarly community working together to inquire and discover, to teach and learn, to create, conserve, disseminate and apply knowledge, and engage with the challenges that face modern society' (Maynooth University, 2018: 14). Its vision is to 'further advance its international standing as a leading research university …' and be recognised for its '...commitment to the public and civic mission of the University, as a national leader in equality and diversity, an excellent place to learn and work, an inclusive community where students and staff can flourish, and as making a distinctive contribution to the national system of higher education and the public good' (2018: 14).

As with many European countries, higher education in Ireland is influenced by European priorities and directives, and Maynooth University in turn is responsive to specific concerns and goals in respect of research, teaching and learning. EU priorities and directives centre around grand societal challenges which have driven Horizon 2020 funding and will also feature in Horizon Europe, the successor to Horizon 2020. Higher Education research in Europe also responds to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In respect of Teaching and Learning, the *Report to the European Commission on Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions*, chaired by Mary McAleese, recommends that 'All staff teaching in higher education institutions in 2020 should have received certified pedagogical training. Continuous professional education as teachers should become a requirement for teachers in the higher education sector' (McAleese, 2013: 65).

In line with EU goals and strategies, the Irish Department of Education and Skills published the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*. This document, referred to locally as the 'Hunt Report', is a key policy document guiding Irish higher education. The report considers contextual and operational aspects of higher education as well as devoting a chapter each to Teaching and Learning, Research and Engagement – the three pillars of Irish higher education. In the research chapter, the recommendation that 'Public research funding should be prioritised and better coordinated and underpinned by effective foresight, review and performance measurement systems' is one that resonates particularly for Maynooth University as an institution (Hunt, 2011: 73). In line with the Hunt Report, Maynooth University seeks to:

- enable research across a wide range of disciplines; (MU has broad research strengths in AHSS and STEM areas)
- ensure that Ireland develops in specific niche areas of world-class standing through a number of thematic areas in which Ireland can excel internationally; (MU has identified priority research areas aligned with Ireland's refreshed priority areas for research and innovation, for example, the research fields of Artificial Intelligence, Climate science etc. (Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation, online)
- support research across the full spectrum of innovation activities, from basic research outwards; (support for basic research is a priority as this feeds the pipeline for applied research in the coming years).

The Hunt Report recommends that students have 'an excellent teaching and learning experience, informed by up-to-date research and facilitated by a high-quality learning environment, with state-of-the-art learning resources, such as libraries, laboratories, and e-learning facilities' (61). In respect of teaching staff, they recommend that 'All higher education institutions must ensure that all teaching staff are both qualified and competent in teaching and learning, and should support ongoing development and improvement of their skills' (62). This theme of continuing professional development is also a priority of the Irish National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education whose role it is to lead and advise on the enhancement of teaching and learning in Irish higher education. Both reflect the recommendations of the McAleese Report.

In turn, the University's intentions reflect the European and Irish national priorities and are articulated in its own strategic plan which is considered in the next section.

OVERVIEW OF THE CENTRALISED SUPPORTS

COST Action 15221 defines centralised supports as 'an office or centre, which is managed by dedicated staff, whose primary role is to provide institution-wide support for the four key activities'. As noted in its strategic plan 'MU has always pursued a strategy of balanced excellence by equally valuing teaching and research and recognising the synergies between them' (Maynooth University, 2018: 6). Maynooth University has centralised supports for all four areas of teaching, learning, research and writing. However, the type and level of support varies across them, due to the diversity of staff and students with whom they work. A brief outline of each is given in the remainder of this section.

Research at Maynooth University spans the disciplines across the Faculties of Arts, Celtic Studies & Philosophy, Social Sciences and Science and Engineering. The Research Development Office (RDO) is one of the offices of the Vice President for Research and Innovation and 'supports the University's research community by providing guidance on grant applications, proposal preparation, external funding, ethical and compliance issues' (Vice President for Research and Innovation, 2019, online).

The Office is responsible for developing and supporting research capacity, performance and activity at Maynooth University, through the following:

- assist faculty in locating and securing funding for research
- provide support to researchers in the development of funding applications
- manage the Research Information System (RIS)
- develop and implement research-related policies
- provide research-related information, communications/publicity
- coordinate University Research Ethics Committees
- provide training support for researchers including the development of transferable skills such as leadership, management and communication
- develop and promote research culture
- miscellaneous research-related activities and projects.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) comes under the remit of the Office of the Dean of Teaching and Learning. Its aim is 'to enhance teaching and learning at Maynooth University through the support and development of good practice and innovation in teaching and learning' (Centre for Teaching and Learning, 2019 online). The work of the Centre includes staff development through accredited programmes, workshops, seminars, teaching fellowships, one-to-one and bespoke support, and department-specific projects and initiatives. The Centre also manages staff development with regards Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) including managing the pedagogical and a number of practical elements associated with the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Moodle. Staff of the Centre also engage in the design and delivery of institutional, national and international collaborative teaching and learning projects with a strong focus on research and scholarship, and acting as lead institution in many projects. Though largely staff facing, there are aspects of CTL's work that are also student facing. These include supporting students in TEL, particularly with Moodle, delivery of an accredited introduction to teaching course for postgraduate tutors and demonstrators, and provision of a university learning to learn induction course to support first year students. The Academic Advisory Office also falls under the remit of the Centre and acts as a first point of contact for students who wish to seek advice or assistance with the academic experience of University life.

The University Writing Centre offers free, friendly, non-judgemental writing help to any student, undergraduate or postgraduate, regardless of course, degree or level. The support is offered primarily through one-to-one appointments, where students can discuss their writing with peer/expert tutors. In addition, Writing Centre staff offer writing workshops, support writing groups, engage in discipline specific work, and research in academic writing and related fields. The work of the writing centre is predominantly student facing though it does have some staff facing elements where it works with colleagues on discipline specific writing support, and where it connects with colleagues who wish to integrate more writing into their teaching, particularly in-class writing. Typical of the work of CTL more generally the writing centre is engaged in activities across the three pillars of the university, namely, teaching, research and service/community.

While these centralised supports have their own specific remits, they also engage and collaborate with other support and academic units and departments across the University, such as the Access Office, who support students from non-traditional groups, the Library, IT Services, Graduate Studies Office, Careers, Admissions, Finance and academic departments.

INTEROPERABILITY AND SYNERGIES

The interoperability and synergies across the supports might be described as direct, indirect and sporadic. There is direct collaboration where the supports are part of the same office or function, as in the case of the CTL and the University Writing Centre where staff from both fall under the overall remit of the Office of the Dean of Teaching and Learning. By default, colleagues working in these areas meet regularly and have a good sense of each other's remits; they connect frequently at team meetings, research and write together, collaborate on projects and consult with each other on various initiatives. There is also direct collaboration between the Research Development Office (RDO), and the CTL and Writing Centre. This occurs where the CTL and the Writing Centre avail of the support offered by the RDO, much as any other university department or unit might. In addition, the CTL and the Writing Centre benefit greatly from practical support from colleagues in the implementation of EU funded projects, not least in terms of the financial support and administration associated with this type of funding. In return, colleagues from the CTL and the Writing Centre have collaborated with RDO staff on information sessions for other colleagues about achieving project funding and managing funding from a particular EU stream.

Indirect interoperability and synergies occur where the three support units feed into the work of another University office, such as in the case of the Graduate Studies Office. All three supports contribute to the work of the Graduate Studies Office through the provision of modules that form part of the PhD structure, master classes for Masters students, workshops, induction, one-to-one work with postgraduates, staff development etc. The three units are aware of each other's contributions and often come together when working with Graduate Studies Office on events such as induction and open days. Indirectly, therefore, opportunities to connect, converse and collaborate exist.

Sporadic interoperability and synergies occur where a colleague from one unit might agree to sit on a panel to review work or to collaborate on a piece of research (this case study for example) or to contribute to a working group for a particular project. Although this type of connected work is short-term and varied, it can be incredibly valuable in that it helps to build relationships, and reinforces how we value the expertise that exists in each of the other units' functions. Sporadic interoperability and synergies also emerge through the collegial relationships that exist between colleagues across the units; some of these colleagues have been with the university for many years and easy informal information exchange, for example to address queries, swap ideas or share opportunities, happens regularly.

OPPORTUNITIES

In order to learn more about each other's work for this case study we met for a professional conversation about what it is we do, how we work, and to consider the opportunities and challenges (see Appendix 1 for a note of the questions considered). During this conversation we first discussed some of the opportunities that exist for the supports both as individual entities and where collaboration across them might occur. All of the units are small in terms of the numbers of people working within them and, relatively speaking, the University is not a big place either in terms of numbers of staff or students, or indeed the scale of the campus. As a result, where their schedules allow, people can meet face-to-face and there is a fairly short 'chain of command' to senior leaders. Given their size, the units can be reasonably agile (by higher education standards!). In addition, for a variety of reasons, there tends not to be significant mobility out of the university – where people secure permanent jobs they seem to stay – so relationships are built up over a long period of time and the desire for collegiality is strong. The units in question have a great deal of expertise, locally, nationally and internationally, and are well networked.

In terms of opportunities for the individual units, each of us would like to be doing more and perhaps doing different things, albeit under the remit of our offices, and sometimes we are provided with the opportunity to explore such things e.g. through funding calls for our units through the Irish government office for higher education – the Higher Education Authority (HEA). There is certainly an opportunity to make each other more aware of the specifics of what we do, we could be meeting and sharing more frequently, we could work on shared opportunities for staff, we could collaboratively connect with other units e.g. library, we could share processes, we could contribute to each other's work more frequently and where it makes sense, we could meet more often with the intention of learning more about how it is we each work and how greater synergies might be achieved, we could work together on a joint needs analysis with departments to see how each of our units might support colleagues, we could share our strategies for connecting with departments etc.

Aside from formal approaches, there are opportunities for working more closely and exploiting synergies which are more informal in character. The institution's strategic plan notes the university's intention to 'expand the provision of informal learning, social, meeting and community spaces across the campus for staff and students, to keep pace with the growth of the University and stimulate conversation and interdisciplinary interaction'(38). This commitment to expanding the provision of informal learning and stimulating interdisciplinary interaction provides a potential platform for addressing one of the key insights that emerged from the COST Action 15221 "Existing Models" data set. Although many participants revealed that there were no formal mechanisms to centralise supports for teaching, learning, research and writing in their institutions, a number of these participants indicated that they often received teaching, learning, research and writing support from colleagues informally. This appears a mirror image of the modes of "informal learning" described in the above extract from the MU Strategic Plan, albeit one that operates at the level of staff rather than that of students. Clearly, there is value in this informal learning, and it would not be desirable to replace it entirely, but it could be possible to acknowledge some of the informal learning activities, which might go some way to ensuring that the staff and students who are leading these activities receive some recognition for their efforts. For the staff, this might mean that their commitment would be factored into their workloads; for students, this might mean gaining some training and experience as "peer tutors" and some financial recompense.

Similarly there may be approaches that are used in the disciplines across teaching, learning, research and writing that could be scalable across the university, might provide collaborative opportunities for the centralised supports or may offer models that could be replicated within the supports. For example, the English Department has run a peer-tutoring programme to provide additional writing support to their students for approximately 10 years. This approach could be extended across the disciplines with the support of the University Writing Centre which would also address concerns around discipline specificity that emerged in the COST Action 15221 "Desirable Models" data set. A comparable model could also be adopted to synergise research, teaching, and learning by adopting the useful approaches of discipline-specific research clusters, and sharing the effective pedagogies across disciplines. Centralised supports

are well-placed to facilitate sharing between disciplines and to identify possibilities in this regard. The physical and online visibility of a "Learning Hub" that might facilitate these activities was stressed in our meeting and in the COST Action 15221 "Desirable Models" data set.

CHALLENGES

The challenges for the support units are in some instances common to them all as is the case with 'reach' or 'buy in'. Colleagues from the Research Development Office and from the Centre for Teaching and Learning find that they connect very well with certain staff members with whom they work consistently. However, moving beyond these established relationships can be challenging. Building new relationships and supporting colleagues as part of continuing professional development to develop as a researcher, or as teacher, takes a great deal of time and the colleagues working in centralised supports, like most other staff members, are short on time. In fact, the lack of time is probably one of the greatest challenges for staff within and outside of the supports. The issue of time emerges repeatedly when one discusses continuing professional development with colleagues; for the most part, colleagues are delighted to learn and to pursue new opportunities, either through research or through teaching and learning, but they feel incredibly time poor. This may be especially so of early career investigators who are often struggling to balance building a research and teaching profile with the ongoing challenge of trying to find a fulltime job.

While time prevents colleagues from across these supports from meeting, sharing practice and collaborating as often as they would like, that colleagues from the various sections are not co-located is also a disadvantage. Staff in the Research Development Office work in the same building and alongside colleagues from Graduate Studies and the Commercialisation Office; the RDO staff remarked that simply being co-located nurtures relationships and allows each group to have a reasonable sense of the work of the other, but in an informal manner. However, RDO staff and CTL and Writing Centre staff do not work in the same building and hence don't 'bump into' each other as often. The units may also suffer from the perceived divide that persists between research and teaching.

Finally, there are sectoral challenges which circle us back to the policy areas mentioned at the beginning of this piece. All the support units work within an expectation of ongoing quality enhancement and of greater accountability. These strategic influences have an impact on what we do, how we do it, for whom, and why.

PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIONS, INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Farrell and Meyhöfer matrix (Appendix 2) maps the combined functions of existing and desirable centralised supports across writing, research, learning and teaching. Examining Maynooth University's centralised supports in light of the matrix, it is apparent that the University currently provides a good deal of what was identified by the Action partners who contributed to the data on which the matrix is based. Nonetheless, there is certainly the potential for enhanced provision and for greater collaboration between the supports. In principle, there appears to be little resistance to this. However, there are two key related challenges in particular which are preventing this from occurring, namely, time and an increase in demands on higher education.

The breadth of the matrix shows just how complex an utterly comprehensive model of centralised supports might be. One element alone from this matrix, for example, evaluation of teaching, or support with regard to funding and grant preparation, or writing across the curriculum, could provide enough work for not just one full-time staff member but potentially a whole team of colleagues. The issue of time is directly related to the expansiveness of the role of higher education. It would appear from the Action data, and the analysis of same, that there is insufficient time to meet the increasing demands on higher education regardless of how committed and dedicated the staff working within it are. It is incredibly challenging for higher education institutions and higher education staff to respond to the needs and requirements of ever more numerous and diverse stakeholders and an associated result is the fragmentation of roles in higher education. Carmody (2019) emphasises this in his analysis of the data from key informants of this Action, noting that the multifaceted nature of academic work demands that academics become highly adaptable, often requiring the adoption of contradictory personality traits (introverted and extraverted, creative and rational, competitive and empathetic, reflective and single-minded, as well as being adaptable and assertive). Many colleagues who participated in the Action research reported that such diverse demands were primary stressors in their work life.

Generalising out from our case study to higher education more broadly, one way of counteracting the expansiveness inherent in contemporary higher education might be to move towards greater institutional integration of functions as a response to the current fragmentation. However, there is the danger that such rationalisation could lead to more work for a smaller cohort of colleagues and perhaps the imposition of structures that could impinge on academic freedom, directly and indirectly. Another alternative approach could follow the recommendation made by Fogarty (2019) who suggested that undergraduate peer tutors, postgraduate teachers, and early career investigators could be employed to formalise the informal support mechanisms that are currently in place by facilitating a range of discipline-specific and/or interdisciplinary writing groups, methodology workshops, researcher clusters, etc. These activities were identified as keys to academic success in the COST Action data because they promote important values and skills, such as inclusivity, well-being, interdisciplinary collaboration, creativity and innovation, communication, and digital literacy and awareness.

Ultimately, one recommendation we propose, based on our Action participation, our everyday work and our writing of this case study, is that higher education institutions seeking to develop across writing, research, learning and teaching, should focus on supporting the people associated with these activities. As Peter Drucker stated 'The most valuable asset of a 21st-century institution, whether business or non-business, will be its knowledge workers and their productivity' (1999:79). We are in the 'business' of education which should be concerned with 'human being and becoming ... standing up to the world and engaging with it and in it purposefully' (Barnett, 2012). People are what make an organisation – even more so a university. In organisations today, staff are a unique and critical resource given their inimitable knowledge (Schuelke-Leech & Leech, 2018). In this era of knowledge, we observe that the people in the organisation have become more valuable than its physical wealth.

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WEBSITES

Horizon 2020 https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en

Maynooth University Centre for Teaching and Learning https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/centre-teaching-and-learning

Maynooth University Strategic Plan https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/MU_strategic_plan_2018-22_internal_launch_22un18_0.pdf

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APPENDIX 1

Five questions/areas considered:

- Brief descriptions of the centralised support in which you work (if you do work in such a centre) – please comment on its placement within the University structures, the size and declared remit (or mission) of each unit, the range of supports offered to colleagues by each unit.
- Your interpretation of the interoperability across these units, and the ways in which each unit communicates and collaborates with staff.
- What do you think are the challenges for these supports?
- What are the opportunities?
- How do you think these support are perceived by staff across campus?

COST Action 15221: Matrix of combined functions of centralised support for teaching, learning, research and writing: common, **desirable**, existing (drawn from Farrell 2018 and Meyhöfer 2018)

	Purposes (What/Why? Goals/Intentions)	Processes (How to? Action)	Knowledge and scholarship	Skills	Values
Teaching	Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) **Needs driven (individual and institutional)** Faculty development Quality assurance/improvement – evaluation of teaching Responding to national and/or international agendas – including standards and competencies	Evaluation **Scaffolded and progressive Reflective Blended Incentivised, recognised and rewarded** Accredited programmes Workshops/seminars Teaching awards Online resources Teaching portfolios Peer observation T&L projects Researching in T&L	**Research (including theory) informed Mindful of technology** Curriculum design (including new programmes)	Initial and CPD for teachers in pedagogy and methods TEL skills **Sharing knowledge with colleagues (communities of practice)**	Freedom/Openness Collaboration **Autonomy** Diversity Collegiality, Quality.
Learning	**Collaborative Self-directed Integrative of technology Core skills and critical thinking Needs driven**	Across units and in dedicated units Personal advisors Peer mentoring Dedicated programmes e.g. orientation Dedicated modules e.g. critical skills/competencies		Technology **Enquiry based Independent learning** Critical skills Transition skills English language skills	Diversity – access and participation **Individualised**
Writing	**Focus on quality and on diversity of output (genre, style and publication) Embedded Far-reaching and transcending of borders** Publication and dissemination (staff) Securing funding (staff) Assessment of learning (students)	Offered to all – staff and students. Tailored - one-to-one Group – retreats, workshops, writing groups Through a variety of units e.g. careers, Library, Provision of resources and dedicated modules Peer support/tutoring	Mindful of discipline specific requirements and of discourse communities/Writing in the Disciplines Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Writing studies	Writing in the discipline Writing for publication English language support Thesis writing Avoiding plagiarism	**Free creation and sharing – open access. Freedom Autonomy Creativity Time and support Equality of opportunity** Collaboration Collegiality Quality Ethics (research)

	Purposes (What/Why? Goals/Intentions)	Processes (How to? Action)	Knowledge and scholarship	Skills	Values
Research	Supporting research communication, collaboration, connection and exchange: within and beyond the institution Support colleagues professional and career development as researchers (inc. mobility) Source, secure, manage funding Ensure ethics Respond to national agenda	**Supervision and assistance Mindful of time and resources** Internal grants and scholarships Research evaluation Workshops/seminars	Clarity around performance indicators and impact – knowing what 'counts' in research Information around the 'enterprise of research' including funding	Support re funding and grant preparation and management (including systems and admin) **Expert and visible support for publishing and presenting research** Mentorships Project management Research methods	

Underpinning desirable characteristics: proactive; evidence and expertise based; synergistic and context sensitive; collaborative and communicative.

THE WRITING CENTRE AT EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY VIADRINA FRANKFURT (ODER)

INTRODUCTION

Established in 2007, the writing centre at European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), Germany, was among the early writing centres in Germany which became models for the rise of writing centres in Germany a few years later. It is part of a larger university unit that supports teaching and learning in various ways, but it has only loose connections with the official central support unit for research. In this sense, the writing centre supports students to use writing for efficient communication and critical thinking and supports teachers to use writing to enhance learning. Informed by interviews with key stakeholders and co-workers at European University Viadrina gathered during an Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM) exchange with Gothenburg University (Sweden) and the University of Limerick (Ireland), this case study presents an overview of the writing centre as part of the centralised supports for writing, research, learning and teaching at European University Viadrina.

BACKGROUND TO THE CASE STUDY

This case study is informed by interviews with key stakeholders and co-workers at European University Viadrina gathered during an STSM exchange with Gothenburg University (Sweden) and the University of Limerick (Ireland) (O'Sullivan 2018). The STSM exchange in European University Viadrina formed, together with STSM exchanges at the other two universities, the Writing Centre Exchange Project (WCEP). The WCEP is conducted within the framework of participatory action research and designed to explore what similarities and differences emerge in terms of the Girgensohn's (2017) model of institutional work of writing centre directors. Data consists of observations, semi-structured interviews with centre staff,

directors and key stakeholder roles, plus video-recorded focus-group activities. The analytical work rests on multiple methods: qualitative thematic content analysis and video-based interaction analysis. The focus on participation and action ensures that writing centre directors and key stakeholders play a central role in this research.

Other sources of information are the mission statements of the writing centre and other support units as well as own experience; the author founded the writing centre and directed other centralised support units at European University Viadrina. For details about European University Viadrina, the website was consulted (www.europa-uni.de).

PROFILE OF THE INSTITUTION

European University Viadrina is a relatively small public German University. It is located at the Polish border, about 100km east of Berlin, in the city of Frankfurt (Oder). From 1506 to 1811, the city of Frankfurt (Oder) was the home of the first public university of the principality of Brandenburg. The old university was closed after the university in Berlin opened. It was re-opened in 1991 by the federal state of Brandenburg, shortly after the German reunification. The new university was explicitly meant to be a symbol for German unity and a bridge to the Eastern Parts of Europe. Polish students were allowed to study at European University Viadrina from the very beginning, before Poland became an EU member country. The university shares a building with a Polish university at the Polish side of the border, which means that students sometimes literally have to cross the border to go to their lessons.

European University Viadrina is a truly international university. About 25% of the students are not from Germany. Most international students come from Poland and other European countries, but also from all over the world. The university has approximately 200 partner universities worldwide. The nearness of the German capital, Berlin, is a plus for the university as well as a minus. The university gains many students from Berlin and also students from other cities, who would like to be close to the capital. However, being just a one-hour-train-ride away and being included in the public transport ticket that all students get, Berlin is also the city were many students and employees choose to live. Therefore, European University Viadrina is a kind of commuter university. This is a disadvantage for extra-curricular offerings, as students prefer to go home after their lessons.

Currently, about 6,000 students are studying in European University Viadrina at three faculties: Law, Business Administration and Economics, Social and Cultural Sciences. The university offers undergraduate and postgraduate programs, mostly in German, but some also in English. Polish and French are also sometimes languages of instruction.

Internationality and interdisciplinary perspectives are values that European University Viadrina asserts to be very important. Research clusters focus on "B/orders in motion", on Europe and on conflict management. The university has about 600 employees, 73 of them are professors.

An important national context with regard to centralised support models is the German "Quality Pact for Teaching" (Qualitätspakt Lehre -- QPL). The QPL is a governmental initiative that aims at enhancing the quality of teaching and learning at German universities. It partly stemmed from students' protests against challenges in higher education that resulted from the Bologna process. For example, students found that the Bologna process brought much bureaucracy, less academic freedom and poor teaching quality due to the need of measuring students' success all the time. One of the main objectives of the QPL is to achieve better staffing of higher education institutions. In addition, the universities are supported in qualifying their staff for teaching, supervision and counselling. Further objectives are to secure and further develop high-quality university teaching. A total of two billion Euros was available between 2011 and 2020 for universities in all 16 federal states (https://www.qualitaetspakt-lehre.de). The European University Viadrina was granted €5.1 Million between 2012 and 2020.

OVERVIEW OF THE CENTRALISED SUPPORTS

European University Viadrina offers centralised support for writing, for teaching and learning, and for research. This has not always been the case and the support has different histories that need to be explained. This section will introduce a) the writing centre, b) the centre for key competences and research-oriented learning and c) the division for research support.

a)   The writing centre
The writing centre was founded as an initiative by former doctoral student Katrin Girgensohn. She started to experiment with student-led writing consultations in 2005, while she was writing her dissertation and teaching some classes. She was inspired by visits at several writing centres in the USA and fascinated by the idea of educating students to become writing consultants and have them facilitate the writing processes to their peers in 1:1-consultations. In 2007, she managed to get funding from the German Hans Böckler Foundation, a public foundation closely related to the workers' unions. The Böckler Foundation offered half of the salary for a fulltime position for one year, if the university would be willing to provide matched fund the other half. The university was very open to this model and the writing centre started in 2007 (Girgensohn & Liebetanz 2015). Twelve years later, in 2019, it is an integral part of the university, but still depends on external funding (currently QPL, see above).

In 2019, the writing centre has 2.5 academic staff positions and between 6 and 10 students who work as peer tutors in writing consultation, workshops, writing groups, writing fellows and in other formats. Since 2018, the writing centre has been located in a central building at a very visible place.

The centre's offerings have expanded broadly. For example, the writing centre offers an ongoing education certificate programme for university teachers, which aims at integrating writing as a learning tool into teaching. Furthermore, the writing centre has invented the "Long Night against Procrastination" that is nowadays a nation-wide event at many universities and celebrated even worldwide (Kiscaden & Nash 2015). In addition, many fundamental publications for writing centres in Germany originate from this writing centre (e.g. Grieshammer et al. 2012; Voigt 2018).

Overall, the writing centre has become a model for many others in Germany and plays a very active role in forming the scientific community of writing studies in Germany, e.g. by hosting events like the inaugural European Writing Centre Summer Institute together with the European Writing Centres Association (EWCA), which itself was for many years chaired by writing centre directors from European University Viadrina.

b)   The Centre for Key Competencies and Research-oriented Learning (ZSFL)
The ZSFL is a unit that has grown around the writing centre after federal money became available in 2012 from the German Quality Pact for Teaching (see above). It is the umbrella institution for the *Writing Centre*, the *Centre for Intercultural Learning* and the *Centre for Digital Learning and Teaching*. It offers support for teaching and co-ordinates the *Teaching Support Programme for Higher Education*, which is located on a federal state level. It also facilitates academic support for students in various ways, integrated in classes as well as in additional formats, like training, consultations or summer schools.

A common project of all centres amalgamated under this umbrella is the *peer tutoring program*. In this program, students are trained as peer tutors in a very substantial education programme, which is embedded in the curricula of all three facilities. Students can gain certificates as a peer writing consultant, as an intercultural trainer, as a language consultant, as an academic content facilitator and as an e-learning consultant. Thus, many of the centralised learning supports for students are led by educated peer tutors in different areas.

c)   The Division for Research Support
The Division for Research Support became an important part of the European University Viadrina when the university applied for a major governmental excellence grant (Exzellenzinitiative) in 2010. It offers consultation for grant opportunities, support for EU grants and initiatives, ethical approval for research, and training programmes and support for doctoral students and postdocs. Furthermore, it provides a database for all publications and research projects at the university to make the university's research more visible and searchable.

INTEROPERABILITY AND SYNERGIES

There are not many connections between the units of the ZSFL and the Division for Research Support. This might be because of the historically different emergence of the units, but there seems also to be a division between teaching and learning on the one hand and research on the other hand. Training in writing and writing retreats for doctoral students are offered in co-operation between the Division for Research Support and the writing centre, but this seems to be currently the only synergy among the units.

The other three units, the writing centre, the Centre for Intercultural Learning, and the Centre for Digital Learning and Teaching have very close relationships. Obviously, this is a result of working under the same umbrella centre and having a common director and a common coordinator. In fact, a key influence for the close relationships is the common peer tutor programme. The programme was designed in compliance with the peer tutor education program of the writing centre and required close interaction in designing the programme as well as in realising common parts of it. The programme is also innovative in the way that it uses e-portfolios as didactical tool in all classes. Experimenting with e-portfolios also helped the staff to work together closely. Peer tutors of the different areas complement each other's areas.

Another synergy can be observed between the teacher education programme of the federal state of Brandenburg, that, for the European University Viadrina, is coordinated at the ZSFL and the teacher education program of the writing centre. Both programmes offer participation in ongoing education workshops that can add up to a teaching certificate. While the certificate of the federal programme is more general, requires heavier workload, and is located at all institutions of higher education in the federal state of Brandenburg, the certificate of the writing centre is smaller and located regionally at European University Viadrina. However, both programs acknowledge some of the workshops of each other and work together on the administration.

More synergies among the ZSFL's centres include common public relation materials and events and some projects, for example an institutional co-operation for teacher exchange with a university in Ukraine. Also, staff members of the centres are in vivid exchange on teaching methods and recent developments in teaching and learning, for example through regularly reading and discussing an "article of the month". Those articles might be classical ones, like e.g. Brooks' (1991) article on minimalist tutoring, as well as from current discussions on higher education in Germany. Team members also regularly discuss challenges arising from their programs.

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities associated with the existing model of support include the possibility to develop ideas and to design programmes and formats across the centres. Also, creating synergies among the areas creates more (women-)power than having individual persons acting in the different areas on their own. Creating a programme like the existing peer tutoring programme, which is acknowledged with credits in study programmes at all three faculties, is more likely to happen with more people behind it.

CHALLENGES

There are also some challenges associated with the existing model of support. One major challenge seems to be that the structure of the Centre for Key Competences and Research-oriented Learning is not easy to understand. All of the belonging units are somehow related to teaching and learning and all of them use peer tutoring. For stakeholders it seems often to be unclear whom to address and even what to ask from the support units. Another challenge can be seen in the value that university teachers in Germany see in teaching in relation to research. For individual careers, conducting research is much more important than good teaching. Therefore, support for teaching might be seen as less important than support for research and, therefore, no need is seen for synergies among those units.

Additional challenge comes with the idea of "support" itself. As a matter of fact, the writing centre at European University Viadrina sees itself as a research-driven unit that itself conducts action research and is very active in building up the community of Germanic writing studies. This is not always valued within the university, because they clearly see the writing centre and also the ZSFL as service units.

The biggest challenge, however, is the dependence of the units on external, governmental funding. This budget is going to end by 2020 and the universities are meant to find ways to integrate the offers into their own budget. Obviously, this causes rivalry and fears, not only among staff members within the centres, but also between university units and the central units.

PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIONS, INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having different central units for research and for teaching, learning and writing seems to widen the gap between teaching and learning. The units do not develop common ideas and offers. On the contrary, the perception of research being more important than teaching seems to become stronger among colleagues. In the case of European University Viadrina, the division is very obvious, because the division for research support belongs to another vice president, it is at another location, and it has completely different resources of funding.

If a university decides to have such separation between central support units, it seems important to have explicit support from the university governance. Moreover, it must become clear that teaching, learning and writing are perceived as very important and that the governance values the work of this central support unit. Thus, top-down support is key. This becomes obvious at European University Viadrina, where the support for writing and for learning and teaching grew more organically out of personal efforts in a grassroots-manner. In this case, even the term 'support' needs to be used very carefully, because it implies that the unit only has a helping function. On the other hand, however, the example of this bottom-up grown unit shows that astonishing structures can grow out of personal initiative.

The explicit commitment of the university government could be expressed not only by stable and plannable resources, but also by public comments and could be seen in how the unit is presented within the university's organigram, homepage and other public relation materials. As could be seen from visits at other universities (e.g. University of Gothenburg, see STSM reports O'Sullivan, Henry and Girgensohn 2018), a deliberately set-up for the organisational structures would be important, including an advisory board with stakeholders from faculty, students and administration. A positive take-home-message from European University Viadrina is that common programmes among the different units create collaboration and power and generate a bigger outcome than every single unit could have on its own. Furthermore, including students in the offers as peer tutors works very well, if they receive profound education and mentoring.

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JURAJ DOBRILA UNIVERSITY OF PULA, CROATIA

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SUPPORT MODEL IN A FUNCTIONALLY INTEGRATED UNIVERSITY. A CASE STUDY FROM CROATIA

INTRODUCTION

In this paper the challenges and opportunities of a centralised support for four core activities in higher education, i.e. writing, research, learning and teaching, are discussed. As a starting point for the discussion, the support model of the Juraj Dobrila University of Pula in Croatia is used. The efficiency of this support model is worth studying since this university is a functionally integrated university, which is a new organisational model in Croatia brought about by its accession to the European Union. An integrated university which connects the functions of all its constituents, and through its administrative units, provides unified and coherent activity, is in contrast with the traditional organisational model of universities where each faculty has strong autonomy and its own support offices.

In order to present a comprehensive perspective of the model, different sources of information were used. University documents and scientific articles that deal with higher education reform in the Republic of Croatia were reviewed. Also, not to have partial information, the opinion of two groups of key informants was collected by means of questionnaires: staff working in support offices as service providers and academic staff as service users. Based on all the collected information, the case study ends with professional reflections and recommendations on the current support models and possible ones. We argue that a centralised office of support is missing; we argue for an office that would provide support to everybody included in the university system, not only to teaching staff.

BACKGROUND TO THE CASE STUDY

In order to obtain a comprehensive perspective of the support model present at the Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Croatia, different sources of information were used. On the one hand, relevant available literature was reviewed i.e. Pula University documents and scientific articles dealing with higher education (HE) reform in the Republic of Croatia. While on the other, new information was collected by means of questionnaires thus bringing the added perspective of two groups of key informants: staff working in support offices as service providers, and academic staff as service users. The questionnaire for the support offices was devised for the purposes of this study. It included twelve open-ended questions and it was filled by 18 employees having at least one representative of each university office. The first questions were more of an objective type, related to organisational facts about the office support (e.g. the description of the activities a specific office provides) moving on to more 'subjective' questions asking for their comments on the effectiveness, complementarity and communication with other offices, and their suggestions for a more efficient support.

The questionnaire for academic staff was designed within the COST action CA 15221: *WeReLaTe: Advancing effective institutional models towards cohesive teaching, learning, research and writing development.* The participants were 32 academics from different departments and faculties that are part of the Juraj Dobrila University of Pula. The COST questionnaire was translated into Croatian, adapted to Croatian HE contexts and administered on-line. Although the participants completed the entire questionnaire, only data regarded relevant to this case study was taken into account (See Appendix 1).

The research relies on a small sample which is a limitation of the methodology (e.g. 20% of the teaching staff completed the questionnaire). However, this study was not meant to be a quantitative in-depth research but rather a first step for future research since data on this subject is not available to the best of our knowledge.

For a better understanding of the existing situation at the Juraj Dobrila University, a broader context would be useful. Thus, the study starts with a short description of the higher education system in Croatia and its transformation since the accession to the European Union in 2013.

PROFILE OF THE INSTITUTION

Higher education in Croatia

The Republic of Croatia has 170,000 students distributed across various colleges, polytechnics and ten universities[1] (Agency for Science and Higher Education, 2020). The universities, which are still regarded as the major signposts for higher education, differ in terms of size, age, ownership (private vs public), prestige, tradition etc. But the new and most discussed term differentiating them is: integrated or non-integrated.

As with all other European countries due to the influence of globalisation, student population growth and information technology, Croatia faced the challenge of finding a new model for the higher education system, one that would adequately reflect the new social and labour market reality. However, the major force that has shaped the transformation of the HE system in Croatia was the process of its accession to the European Union. In 2002, Croatia signed the Bologna Declaration and its aims were incorporated in a new Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education that was ratified by the Croatian Government in 2003. According to the Act, universities should become **functionally integrated**, meaning that the university integrates the functions of all its constituents, and through its administrative units provides a unified and coherent activity. To avoid financial irrationality and wasting of academic and administrative resources, the university should harmonise the organisational, teaching, research and financial aspect of all its constituents and develop a centralised library and IT system. On the other hand, the traditional fragmentation of Croatian universities into autonomous faculties with their own administrative units poses an obstacle to the effective use of human and financial resources, internal mobility of staff and students, and the creation of interdisciplinary programmes that would meet the needs of labour market demands (Lučin and Prijić-Samaržija, 2012, Polšek, 2004). Although, there is a consensus about the necessity of transforming the non-integrated universities into integrated, older Croatian universities have shown reluctance to do it, since their faculties would lose their strong autonomy.

Thus, out of ten Croatian Universities, the three that were more recently founded are integrated universities i.e. the University of Zadar (2002), the University of Dubrovnik (2003) and the University of Pula (2006).

The Juraj Dobrila University of Pula

The Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, being founded in 2006, is the youngest established university in Croatia. However, its educational roots stretch back to the 1950s when it became clear that Istria (a west Croatian county and the largest peninsula in the Adriatic Sea) required a higher number of educated

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[1] For detailed information and statistics about higher education in Croatia see site of the Agency for Science and Higher Education, English version, www.azvo.hr/en/.

people, primarily those from the economic and teaching professions. Consequently, the Higher School of Economics was founded in 1960 and the Pedagogical Academy in 1961. These two areas have remained the central points around which other HE institutions developed in Pula. From the economic stem, the Faculty of Economics and Tourism with programmes in management, tourism, marketing has evolved, while the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Interdisciplinary, Italian and Cultural Studies, Music Academy have grown from the pedagogical academy. The Faculty of Informatics, Department of Natural and Health Sciences, Department of Engineering logically emerged along the changes connected with modern life. Still, the university shows a stronger orientation towards social sciences, humanities and arts which is the result of its tradition.

As Croatia signed the Bologna Declaration and its aims were incorporated in the new Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education in 2003, the University had to adapt to the new circumstances. In order to implement the Bologna process and adjust the teaching and non-teaching methods to the European standards, the following changes were introduced: three study cycles were structured enabling the establishment of a national qualification framework in accordance with the European one, a quality assurance system was formed, the European Credit Transfer System was implemented, and doctoral studies established (Juraj Dobrila University, 2020a). The implementation did not only relate to structural changes; the Act required the functional integration of universities, so the University amended its Statute accordingly.

'The University integrates the function of its constituents (the functional integration of the University) in such a way that it ensures a unified and co-ordinated activity of its bodies in accordance with strategic and developmental decisions about academic questions and about profiling scientific research, a unique and harmonized activity in financial management...' (Article 6.2) and 'The Rectorate can have in its structure organizational units (centralized services, offices and centers) for the functional integration of the University (Article 36.2) (Juraj Dobrila University, 2020b).

Nowadays the Juraj Dobrila University of Pula is the temporary home for almost 4,000 students offering 47 programmes through various faculties and departments (Juraj Dobrila University, 2020a).

OVERVIEW OF THE CENTRALISED SUPPORTS

Being an integrated university, the Rectorate and centralised offices have been founded as one organisational unit. Centralised offices could be roughly divided into two groups according to support provided: 'non-academic/administrative' support (*Office for General Services and Purchases, Office for Financial and Accounting Matters, Office for Legal and Personnel Administration, Office for Foreign Degree Validation*) and 'academic' support (*Office for Research, Art and Projects, Office for International Cooperation and Projects, Office for Quality Assurance, Office for IT support, Office for PhD Studies and Lifelong Learning*)

Although centralised offices for academic support were founded, there are no specific offices for the support of writing, learning and teaching. There are only two offices partially dedicated to research (i.e. *Office for Research, Art and Projects and Office for International Cooperation and Projects*). However, they differ in terms of stakeholders. The primary goal of the former office is to foster scientific and research co-operation of the academic staff on the national and international level implementing the University strategy for research development. Thus, it is more focused on the research strategy at an administrative and legislative level among various institutions and the Government. On the other hand, the *Office for International Cooperation and Projects* devotes effort to fostering co-operation among academics in order to achieve higher quality in research through promoting mobility, and helping with the administration of international projects. The support of writing, learning and teaching could be provided indirectly through the activities of this office which provides help with staff mobility which in turn is how an academic could improve his or her skills by staying and working at another institution.

Another office that provides indirect support of teaching and learning is the *Office for Quality Assurance,* which among other activities, deals with students' evaluations of the academics' teaching style and performance where that data could provide constructive feedback for professional growth. Similarly, the help provided by the *Office for IT Support* for teaching and learning is twofold: it provides technical, and it provides pedagogical support. Both are important: the first one being indispensable in today's world and the second one giving a chance to upgrade the teaching style.

In conclusion, the centralised offices of the Juraj Dobrila University are not equally devoted to the four core areas of higher education. There are offices for support in research, while for teaching and learning the support is indirect through various activities of a few offices. However, support for writing is neglected.

INTEROPERABILITY AND SYNERGIES

As can be seen from the above-mentioned, there are various offices providing different support. In order to obtain an inside view about the efficiency and complementarity across such a wide support, a questionnaire was given to the support office staff.

In their opinion the activities of the numerous offices are complementary having in mind that some offices offer direct help to teaching staff (e.g. *Office for Quality Assurance*) while others provide administrative support which arises from legal requirements (e.g. *Office for Legal and Personnel Administration*), and some offer both (e.g. *Office for International Cooperation and Projects*). They rated their co-operation with an average grade of 4 (grade range 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest) stating that their co-operation is correct and professional but admitting some challenges:

1. Communication harmonising: lack of systematic communication, ill-defined roles in communication sharing, frequent change of employees sometimes generates inhibited fluidity of information, and that communication improvement is needed horizontally (among offices) and vertically (towards the university).

2. Capacity: need for more space, larger offices, reinforcement of staff (both administrative and teaching), more education (e.g. team management, advanced statistical analysis), less administration, and cut down on paperwork in favor of digital documents; all offices stressed there are under-staffed because the growth of the university results in lack of staff and heavy workload.

3. Unified identity of the university: need for more information that concerns everybody about what is happening at the university, participating at team building events, organising joint meetings, linking with teaching staff through joint workshops, unifying all offices through meetings since they are all mutually dependent.

When asked which support model is better, all administrative offices think that each faculty should have its own offices of support (the old model) while all academic support offices consider centralised integrative offices being a better option. The arguments for centralised support are higher efficiency because the University is small and functional integrity allows systematic development of all constituents which should work by the same standards. Furthermore, they equate decentralisation with dispersion of activities creating difficulties in monitoring them. In contrast, advocates of decentralised offices list as arguments: the specificities of each constituent; lack of staff for centralised offices resulting in excessive workload; smaller units mean faster performance, better quality control and more structured communication.

Two participants stated that both organisational structures (centralised and non-centralised) could be effective because each faculty/department is an entity per se, having different needs. This is an interesting concept i.e. the support system should come from bottom-up emerging from the actual needs and possibilities of an organisation, and not an equal top-down structure that does not fit different institutions.

OPPORTUNITIES

Although higher education institutions in Pula started emerging in 1948, the Juraj Dobrila University was founded as an integrated university in 2006. Since it is a very young university, it has been developing from year to year trying to find the best solutions for teaching and professional development in order to have quality outputs in teaching and research, sustainable management and to be a support for local community. However, it seems that more internal studies and reports are needed in order to improve the efficiency of the university and a more 'introspective' approach, as the reports usually made are for the 'outside' i.e. for the ministry of education that monitors the universities. Without an information system within the institution that gathers relevant data, it is difficult to allocate resources and form a strategy (Lučin and Prijić-Samaržija, 2012). Hence, participating in international projects, like the COST action *Advancing effective institutional models towards cohesive teaching, learning, research and writing development,* is essential as they are a good starting point for a little bit of introspection.

Just using the questionnaires with the support providers and users, valuable insights about the potential adjustments of the support system are gained. For example, support offices although stating that their activities are efficient and useful, still suggested additional activities which are currently not provided by the University but could contribute to the quality of teaching staff performance in the areas of writing, research, learning and teaching. This input is valuable since it is coming from an inside perspective based on practice and observation and it could be used as an opportunity to improve the support efficiency, especially for a young university dealing with a new support system.

Aside from the advantage of having an internal perspective on support, it would be beneficial, as one support office staff member wrote: 'to link with teaching staff through joint activities'. The fact of not being such a large university should be exploited and joint activities could facilitate the exchange of ideas and needs between support offices and teaching staff in a more informal environment. Being a smaller university should provide the opportunity of better linking with people and maybe tailor-made support. Considering the crucial importance of writing in the academic profession, more support should be given to writing. Teaching staff identified themselves as being less successful in writing compared to teaching, research and learning. According to them, one of the barriers to writing is lack of institutional support. Some of the writing supports that they suggest best lead to effectiveness and success are: structured feedback, English language support and editor corrections/services. These are activities currently not provided by the university offices. Establishing an additional office or centre for writing, or incorporating more writing support into the current support model would be an opportunity to improve the academics' work in general and consequently rise the rating of a young university in the long run.

CHALLENGES

Even before the accession of Croatia to the EU, there was the need for a reform in HE because of the dysfunctional organisation of its universities but Bologna catalyzed this (Lučin and Prijić-Samaržija, 2012; Baketa, 2014). However, the defragmentation of universities into different faculties and their strong autonomy is a deeply rooted in the past (Baketa, 2014; Kostić, Jovanović and Jurić, 2019). This led half of the Croatian universities to reject the functional integration, but also led to some challenges in the newly integrated universities.

Based on the data gathered for this paper, it is possible to see that the new support offices although centralised do not feel like a new unified identity. This notion emerges when asked what would improve their efficiency: 'linking through joint workshops', 'team building, to unify the meetings because we are all mutually dependent' or 'to introduce a co-ordinator who would mediate information and link people' and 'open communication'. The lack of unity is also felt vertically and articulated when asked how to improve their co-operation with teaching staff: 'to organise workshops or education about the importance of team working', 'more respect towards the IT maintenance people', 'linking through joint workshops' or as a participant nicely summarised: 'there is a space for the improvement of communication both horizontally (with other offices) and vertically (towards the university).' Joint activities among the teaching staff of various faculties are also scarce which prevents exchange of ideas and the much-needed interdisciplinary dialogue.

The participants also mentioned the need for better IT infrastructure, larger offices, need for recruiting more staff and developing paperless administration, all of which are related to the problem of financing and the current financial policy of the state. The feeling is that first basic needs should be met, and then a more refined support system could be developed.

Another step of implementing the Bologna process at the Juraj Dobrila University was building a quality assurance system, thus the *Office for Quality Assurance* was founded. Their role is very important in keeping track of quality and adherence to academic standards. However, it seems that there is a missing link in the chain of support. The *Office* gives valuable information if there is a problem in a certain area by using evaluations and statistics, but then it seems there is lack of support in finding the solution to the problem e.g. teachers stated they would like to have teaching skill development workshops and support for research. The same issue is visible with IT usage. The *Office for IT Support* is indispensable with their help in maintaining the equipment and managing the IT resources, but both the teaching staff and the *Office* staff stated that the teaching staff needed more education about IT usage in general and its implementation in the teaching process.

PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIONS, INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In our opinion, in order to fill the gap of the missing link in support, an *Office for Support* should be founded. The office would act as a mediator for different units and people. It could receive the information about the current needs via evaluation data, official statistics or person-to-person conversation, and according to this, try to find the optimal solution and organise related activity. If the solution is not available with in-house resources, it could outsource educators for a targeted workshop e.g. about team working or time management as a University employee mentioned in the questionnaire. The office could work also as a lessons-learned unit and based on accumulated experience try to optimise the university system and anticipate problems. The office should not have a fixed list of activities and support topics because nowadays the university environment is changing fast. Therefore, the office should work with a clear goal (i.e. support) but based on ongoing input, choose the adequate strategy and support activities. The support system should come from bottom-up emerging from the actual needs and possibilities of an organisation, and not an equal top-down structure that does not fit different institutions.

When talking about support activities, perhaps some new approaches should be explored since the most common mentioned activity is 'workshop'. Introducing support groups, peer groups, discussion groups or person-to-person activities could be beneficial in multiple ways. They could help building the missing unity, could foster the circulation of ideas and open communication, and could help spreading knowledge (experience, good practice) in an informal way. Sometimes, some individuals do not like obligatory workshops; as noted by a participant 'I do not want any support. It obstructs and devalues my work'. It was noted that some university staff never attend organised workshops: 'always the same people are attending [the workshops], and these ones need workshops the least because they are already successful'. Giving the opportunity for people to come to the office, tell their specific need and propose a different support activity, might probably attract more employees.

When talking about employees, the *Office for Support* should provide support not only for teaching staff, which is usually the target group when support is organised, but it should provide support to everybody included in the university system. In the questionnaire, teaching and administrative staff stated they would like additional education. Students have their support offices. However, senior academics who hold the posts of rector, dean etc. can be left out of the list of prospective 'support clients'. The changes that have been present in European HE (e.g. massive expansion and marketisation) have brought new challenges on the existing university resources, therefore a New Management Public movement is advocated in the public sector (Kostić, Jovanović and Jurić, 2019). It focuses on the need to reform the public sectors by introducing management models of private sectors for better efficiency. This was perfectly captured by a participant stating that '*a simplified way of working procedures in accordance with modern business, just like in a private sector*' is what would increase the university efficiency. Consequently, it could be beneficial for all included in the university management and policy planning to have additional education. Like in a mechanism, only if all gears are tuned, will the system work perfectly. It is a chain reaction. This issue was also underlined for the whole area of HE in Croatia in the OECD Reviews of Tertiary Education (Duke et al., 2008) where it was pointed out the importance of the collective responsibility of the institution for the development of quality.
To conclude:

- although the university is integrated and has joint offices for support, there is need for strengthening the new unified identity of the university by organising joint activities both horizontally (among offices, among academics) and vertically (across management, offices, academics)
- the current system of support functions more in a way to identify a problem and less about organising activities to solve the problem. Therefore, it would be beneficial to have a centralised office for support that would act as a mediator among different entities and organise tailor-made support activities based on received input
- the Office for Support could act as a lesson-learned unit that could collect valuable data for future policy planning and resource allocation
- both administrative and teaching staff expressed the need for additional education stressing the importance to have an office that could provide support to everybody included in the university system as quality is developed through collective responsibility
- when comparing support for the four core academic activities, writing is most neglected although support in that area is most needed.

Since a different academic tradition is deeply rooted in Croatia, adjusting to a new one (i.e. integrated universities) could take time. Therefore, being part of EU projects where different good practices are encountered is a valuable experience and it should be fostered as much as possible.

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APPENDIX 1

Due to limited space, just a part of data is presented:

I. Support staff questionnaire
In your opinion, which activities that are currently not offered at the university would contribute to writing, teaching, research and learning?

Writing - workshops for writing scientific journal articles, research paper writing support
Research - more support with the application of international projects and research
Teaching - obligatory methodical training for all teaching staff, education in using IT in teaching
Learning - conferences, better education in using IT in general that will lead to efficient usage, additional education organized by the University for lifelong learning, education about Open access, team building, conferences

Do you have any suggestions to improve co-operation quality with?

a) other support offices?   to introduce a coordinator who would mediate information, link people and accelerate activities, linking through joint workshops, team building, to unify the meetings because we are all mutually dependent, improve communication and flow of information and documents, implement a system of document management, open communication
b) teaching staff?   linking through joint workshops, to organize workshops or education about the importance of team working, more respect towards the IT maintenance people, linking through joint workshops, time management workshops, deepening the digital literacy of teaching staff, information in due time

II. Teaching staff questionnaire
5-point Likert-type scale, 1 Strongly disagree – 5 Strongly agree

I identify myself as a successful academic teacher	4.13
I identify myself as a successful academic researcher	3.97
I identify myself as a successful academic learner within my profession	3.84
I identify myself as a successful administrator/manager	3.75
I identify myself as a successful academic writer	3.69

Writing

Barriers to writing (the highest averages are listed)

lack of time	3.44
workload	3.25
lack of institutional support	3.16

What centrally provided writing support, in your experience, best leads to effectiveness and success in writing (5 most useful – 1 least useful) (all answers with average above 4 are listed)

access to relevant literature	4.58
structured feedback	4.19
English language support	4.03
editor corrections/services	4.03

Research
What has been the most significant and effective research support that your institution has provided for you?

financial support	53%
No support, not enough support	13%
No answer	28%
Sabbatical	3%
Invitation to join a project	3%

Teaching
The support that I would most like my institution to provide for me as a teacher, at this stage in my career is…

Financial, support for getting grants	f 6
Education, workshops with current topics, workshop for teaching skill development	3
More time for research, support for research, less teaching hours to do more research	3
Better IT infrastructure	2
relevant literature	1
less administrational work	1
Person-to-person co-operation on an international level	1
I do not want any support. It obstructs and devaluate my work.	1
I don't know	1
None anymore, I've been working for 37 years	1
I've already received support	1
No answer	11

Learning
In terms of your continuing professional development and learning, please rate the extent to which you think engaging in the following learning opportunities would help you to be successful and effective in your career where 5 is absolutely helpful and 1 is not at all helpful. (all answers with average above 4 are listed)

Disciplinary related research support	4.38
Conference/event attendance	4.28
Cross disciplinary research support	4.28
ICT training	4.23
Support on building collaborations and networks	4.16
Support on engaging in EU/international projects	4.13

UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO & UNIVERSITY OF GRANADA

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WRLT SUPPORT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO IN COMPARISON WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF GRANADA – (CIVIL) ENGINEERING FIELD PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

Institutional support for WRLT (**w**riting, **r**esearch, **l**earning and **t**eaching) may be analysed from different aspects – certain resources (e.g. financial, time, etc.) should be provided for these activities, staff should be appropriately trained, and they should be adequately motivated for each of them. It is not simple to formulate one unique institutional support model that will provide synergy and complementarity among the WRLT directions, from all listed aspects.

Needs, capacities and organisational schemes of institutions vary greatly, not only among institutions, but also among units within one institution. Hence, different support models will be more or less suitable for different institutions (and/or their units). However, institutions may learn from each other, from their good/bad practices, even when they largely differ.

This case study presents the situation at the University of Montenegro, Montenegro, reflecting mostly an engineering point of view. More precisely, it is written from the perspective of civil engineering, but the authors, who are civil engineers, do believe it may stand for the overall engineering field and even for some other disciplines. A comparison with the University of Granada, Spain, in certain aspects, is also presented herein, with an intention to formulate recommendations for the Montenegrin university, based on applicable good practice of the Spanish university, having a longer tradition and better ranking as well as being bigger, measured by size of student and staff communities. Hence, despite the differences in background and otherwise of the two universities, some types of institutional WRLT support being implemented at the University of Granada would be appropriate for Montenegrin conditions and may be introduced at the University of Montenegro without significant difficulties.

BACKGROUND TO THE CASE STUDY

The case study is a result of the analysis of institutional support for WRLT activities at the University of Montenegro (further UoM) and its comparison with the University of Granada (further UGR) in certain aspects.

The situation at the UoM has been analysed based on the personal experiences of the case study authors, primarily as university teachers at different organisational units (i.e. faculties – Faculty of Civil Engineering and Faculty of Architecture) and also as members of several management bodies at the faculty (Faculty of Civil Engineering (further FCE UoM)) and university level, such as the FCE UoM Dean's Collegium, the UoM Centre/Board for Doctoral Studies, the UoM Council for Natural and Technical Sciences, etc. Additionally, a survey of and interviews with colleagues from the UoM were conducted, as well as thorough analysis of official UoM documents (general acts – strategies, rulebooks, agreements, etc. (UoM, 2016/2020; UoM, 2018; UoM, 2019; Collective Agreement for the UoM, 2016/2019).

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Analysis of and comparison with the situation at the UGR was possible thanks to the Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM) within COST CA 15221, realised in April 2019, at the UGR, by Biljana Šćepanović, supervised by Luisa María Gil Martín (Šćepanović, 2019). A survey and interviews were used among UGR staff, similar to that which had happened at the UoM. Again, the rich personal experience of the case study authors from the UGR made a huge contribution to the analysis presented herein.

Gender balance, age balance as well as balance among different university positions (from masters and PhD students to full professors) were considered during the selection of survey/interview participants at both universities (Šćepanović et al., 2020).

The authors of this case study, as is typical of most academics, started their university careers immediately or very soon after graduation, from the (lowest) level of teaching/research assistant, building year-on-year, through masters and PhD studies, as lecturers with PhD degree, up to the level of associate or full professors, being also vice deans, heads of departments, etc. Hence, their experience through the time and different positions may be considered as interesting and important for following development of institutional support models and having observations from different points of view.

PROFILE OF THE INSTITUTION

The University of Montenegro (UoM) is the oldest and the largest HE, scientific and artistic institution in Montenegro. Some important points of note about the UoM:
-   founded in 1974;
-   only public/state university in Montenegro;
-   comprehensive university, covering engineering, natural sciences, medicine, social sciences, humanities and arts;
-   19 faculties + 2 institutes in Podgorica and other Montenegrin towns;
-   over 20,000 students (>70% student population of Montenegro);
-   around 1,200 staff (75% academic + 25% administration and technical staff);
-   member of the European Universities Association (EUA).

The values of the UoM lie in academic excellence, autonomy, creativity and the freedom to create, as well as in support for teachers, researchers and students to raise their profiles in national and international professional and scientific public.

The UoM is an integrated university, organised according to the principles of the Bologna Declaration, with curricula being continuously harmonised not only with those at the most respectable European universities, but also with modern scientific achievements and labour market needs. This, as well as numerous agreements and exchange programmes in which the UoM takes part, enables mobility without barriers in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) for students and staff.

The UoM has almost no staff engaged purely in research. With the exception of two institutes, which are basically research units with predominantly research activities and staff, over 95% of UoM academic staff are engaged in teaching and research. Of these staff, teaching represents a high percentage of their workload. The percentage of exclusively teaching staff at the UoM is very low, less than 10%. Hence, the vast majority of UoM academic staff are teachers and researchers at the same time, without a real option to choose between two tracks.

The Faculty of Civil Engineering (FCE), a unit of the UoM, is the only civil engineering HE institution in Montenegro. The following are some key features of the FCE UoM:
-   founded in 1980;
-   over 600 students;
-   50 staff (76% academic + 24% administration and technical staff);
-   licensed scientific research institution, registered by the Montenegrin Ministry of Science;
-   strong connections with civil engineering industry and deep involvement in practice through participation in numerous engineering projects with its human, laboratory and equipment resources, dealing particularly with complicated, complex and challenging engineering issues.

Despite obvious differences between the two universities (university tradition, history and ranking; country size, wealth and HE system, etc.), the University of Granada (UGR) was chosen for comparison (and a possible example of good practice that may be an inspiration for some improvements at the UoM) due to evident similarities in certain aspects such as the comprehensive nature of the university, age/history and size (by students and staff number) of their civil engineering schools, etc. Engineering is a universal field. Civil engineering, in particular, is basically the same throughout the world – the profession of civil engineer does not differ largely globally; the purpose and principles of civil engineering are always and everywhere the same. Consequently, education, research and needs in this field are very similar in different countries, so comparisons are possible and desirable. An additional motive for comparison of the UoM with the UGR was the similarity between the people's mentality, character and life-pace that may be simply denoted as Mediterranean.

OVERVIEW OF THE CENTRALISED SUPPORTS

The plain fact is that neither of the two analysed universities has clear support across all four areas of WRLT, for each of the three aspects considered herein: providing resources, staff training and staff motivation. Certain resources (e.g. financial, time, etc.) are necessary for successful realisation of WRLT activities. In addition, staff should be appropriately trained as well as adequately motivated for each of these activities. Although the authors of this case study have been witnessing the process of support developing at both universities, a certain flow in the opposite direction may also be noted.

When the authors of this case study started their university careers, at the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s, there was no institutional support for any of the four WRLT activities regarding staff training and motivation in either institution. The only support that may be counted on was that which was obtained from academic advisers (masters and/or PhD supervisors) and more experienced colleagues. Everything was at a very personal level and dependent on supervisors' and other colleagues' goodwill and ability to advise younger colleagues on how to find their way in the WRLT world. Certainly, it also depended on novices' personal attitude, their willingness and their readiness to learn and cope with WRLT activities. Without being institutionally taught how to teach, how to do research and/or write about it in a standardised and consistent way, generations of university staff were self-taught in the four areas of WRLT on the basis of trial-and-error. The "only" motivation was entirely self-driven – determination to upgrade one's personal profile and to enhance one's career.

The situation is much better now concerning staff training and motivation. Both universities started providing institutional support in some of WRLT activities for their students and staff, particularly those at the beginning of their career, who in turn welcome that support and consider it very useful.

UoM offers the following resources:

- a course on scientific research methodology for PhD students. At the moment, this course is elective, available for all students of all fields/disciplines, with an intention to become obligatory.
- occasional short seminars/workshops on academic integrity, open for students and staff.
- rewards for successful researchers. Publication of scientific papers and citation of published papers in respected journals or monographs is financially rewarded. Several types of annual prizes for successful researchers have been established at the university or university units' level (UoM, 2016/2020).
- valorisation of research work through salary. Previously, the salary of academic staff was calculated depending on their title and lecturing workload. Research workload was "assumed", determined by title. From 2020, research work should be one of parameters for salary calculation (Collective Agreement for the UoM, 2016/2019).

UGR offers the following resources:

- a course on academic writing for PhD students. At the moment, the course is general, for students of all fields/disciplines, available for a limited number of participants.
- a programme of mentoring young teachers by experienced professors. The programme assumes that the mentor attends some lectures of the young teacher and that some of those lectures are recorded. Later on, the mentor and the young teacher discuss the lectures and the recordings. The mentor also prepares reports about the young colleague's performance and improvement.

All mentioned resources are organised and implemented centrally, by universities, and available for staff and students of all university units.

Regarding time/financial resources for WRLT activities, the situation has also significantly changed in the last few decades, but not completely positively. Organisational units of the UoM had a much higher level of independence previously and FCE UoM could provide financial support for research organisation (e.g. ITC and laboratory equipment, test specimens, site investigations, etc.) as well as paid leave for research and/or writing purposes. It is not the case anymore, either at faculty or at university level. New sources of finances are opening up, at state/national or international level. However, the issue of time is getting more and more problematic.

INTEROPERABILITY AND SYNERGIES

Since neither of the analysed universities has a real centralised comprehensive WRLT support model, interoperability and synergy across supports can hardly be discussed overall, especially in an affirmative manner. Yet, in such partially developed models of institutional support, some interactions may be pointed out.

The UGR programme of mentoring young teachers by experienced professors is a very good and practical programme from the perspective of both parties – the mentored novices and the mentors. Basically, it is support for teaching, but its benefits go beyond the early career teachers and the teaching itself. Interviewed mentored novices (PhD students) said it was helpful for them, providing important advice which led to significant improvement in their teaching performance. Mentors also consider this programme very useful for young colleagues. Furthermore, mentors believe this engagement also helped them to see things from different points of view and to improve themselves and their own teaching performance as well. Hence, the programme indirectly provides support for continuous professional learning for experienced colleagues. Ultimately, the final result is better learning performance of students built on the interwoven nature of learning and teaching.

Lack of the UoM institutional understanding of the importance of time as a resource (within job organisation on a daily basis, as well as in the case of specific supported (paid) leave such as writing retreats, sabbatical leave, postdoc studies, etc.) for high quality research and writing, significantly influences both the teaching and the research performance of the UoM academic staff, who are both teachers and researchers. A negative influence is unavoidable when staff, overloaded by lecturing hours, are continuously trying to balance between teaching and research combined with writing. As a result, students' learning performance may suffer. All four WRLT activities work together and influence each other, as a domino effect. Currently, the UoM staff has high expectations regarding time management, as a result of a new collective agreement, a document based on which workloads and salaries at the UoM are determined, that will be in force from 2020 (Collective Agreement for the UoM, 2016/2019).

OPPORTUNITIES

Although it may sound absurd, some disadvantages of the UoM support model may transform into advantages or opportunities.

It has been mentioned that certain segments of the FCE UoM financial resources were intensively used for financing the organisation of research in the earlier period. Due to the UoM restructuring and some Montenegrin laws that came into force during the last decade, FCE UoM lost one source of income that was generously used for research. Hence, internal investment in research has been rather restricted. Although it is a substantial drawback, it may also be observed as an opportunity – for turning to external (national and international) sources for research funding, which usually means networking with other institutions, a lot of new personal and institutional contacts and general increase of openness to new research challenges.

Different options of research funding are opening up, such as PhD research excellence grants by Montenegrin Ministry of Science. This is a completely new programme, since 2018, that for the first time provides free doctoral studies in Montenegro for those students who have proved their excellence. In addition, these PhD candidates are also paid (have a salary) to do their PhD research. That is a complete novelty in Montenegro. Even though it is not really institutional, but state support, it is a step forward towards constituting institutional support, for which the UoM is preparing, by planning a reduction in PhD tuition fees, and generally improved conditions for PhD students as the human future of research.

In the situation of developing models of institutional support, like currently at the UoM, it is not easy to differentiate opportunities and challenges. Such distinction may not even be necessary. Each possibility for improvement of the current situation and contribution to the support model is an opportunity and a challenge at the same time. It may be considered as a challenging opportunity. One of them is the implementation, realisation in practice of ideas, plans and statements from strategic documents as (UoM, 2019). Furthermore, all examples of good practice from the UGR, presented throughout the text of the case study and quoted below in section "Challenges", may also be considered as challenging opportunities for the UoM – to use own resources and inner strength for bettering WRLT support system, by enhancing its existing segments concurrently with introducing new ones.

CHALLENGES

A big challenge for the UoM is to upgrade its support, primarily in the areas of academic writing and teaching.

A course on academic writing, like at the UGR, would be more than welcome. The implementation does not have to be overly demanding. It could be organised as a course within the PhD studies, similar and even related to the existing course of scientific research methodology. The UGR experience implies that such courses should be specialised by disciplines, i.e. not having absolutely the same content for all participants, but offering special sessions for technical sciences and engineering, natural sciences, medicine, social sciences, humanities, etc. after introductory core lectures on common basis. Particular emphasis should be placed on writing in English as a foreign language. The course should be open not only for PhD students, but also to academic staff. Even experienced staff should be motivated to attend it.

Teaching as a noble, complex and comprehensive practice, deserves special attention and support in each system. Being an expert in any discipline does not necessarily and automatically mean being a good teacher. Some people have a natural talent for communicating knowledge to others, and some obtained (or improved) teaching skills through education and/or professional experience. For the others, especially for those at the very beginning of university teaching career, support in this area would be essential. The UGR model of mentoring young teachers by more experienced colleagues may be easily implemented at the UoM. Additionally, regular (at least once per year) seminars and workshops combining pedagogy, psychology and teaching topics would be beneficial for academic staff at different career stages. Teaching quality is crucial for the quality of the learning process. The continuous improvement of teaching approaches will not only make teachers more skilful, but also more self-confident. This combination will result in much better teaching performance that will reflect in much better learning performance and students' satisfaction. Both of these will have a positive impact on university ranking.

In terms of support for development of writing and teaching skills, the UoM could works within its own community, in combination with outsourcing through various international capacity building projects. Hence, these targets are achievable without huge efforts and demands.

Much trickier for the UoM is the challenge of time-management, i.e. how to find an appropriate balance between, and how to determine reasonable limitations for, the research and teaching workload of academic staff, including the topic of sabbatical or other leave. This is a university organisation and institutional financial model matter. Any change in the state-of-the-art would necessitate a change in staff numbers (increase) and in their incomes (possible, but non-desirable decrease that should be avoided by all means). As a state/public university, the UoM is primarily funded by the state budget of Montenegro and the Montenegrin Government is the important decision maker in this area. Hence, it is not only an internal institutional affair. A key document regulating this issue is the collective agreement among three parties: Union of the UoM; Montenegrin Government, represented by the Ministry of Education; and the UoM (Collective Agreement for the UoM, 2016/2019).

PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIONS, INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Needs, capacities and organisational schemes of universities vary greatly, not only among universities, but also among faculties/schools/institutes within one university. A support model successfully applied at the university of technical sciences may not be suitable for the university of social sciences and humanities, and vice versa. Comprehensive universities have the difficult task of developing support models that will satisfy the rather different, sometimes even contrasting, needs of different disciplines. This case study is elaborated from the (civil) engineering perspective, with an intention to point out necessities in terms of support of that branch among academic staff. Although not all, certainly some other disciplines have similar needs and may easily recognise themselves here.

There are no (or there should not be) doubts regarding the level of skills of university staff in their professions. They should all be exceptionally good in their disciplines – extraordinary engineers, medical doctors, lawyers, economists, biologists, musicians etc. However, what about their pedagogical skills? Or writing skills? These domains may have been neglected during their education. In the vast majority of cases, they did not get any training in these areas while studying. Hence, it would be valuable for them, their associates and students to get the appropriate help. Neither pedagogy nor academic writing are "easy" disciplines, and both deserve proper training. A separate issue is writing in the English language. If we don't want our research to remain closed in our laboratories, offices, computers and heads, hidden from publicity, we have to publish it, i.e. to write about it – in an appropriate way (academic writing), usually in the English language which is not the mother tongue for a huge number of scientists. This is not an easy task, particularly for professionals in engineering, technical sciences, natural sciences, medicine etc. Even in research activities, although professionally oriented, beginners and less experienced staff of all fields would highly benefit from appropriate directions and advice regarding general organisation of work as well as devotion to certain aspects and details.

Those who already proved their quality in all WRLT activities also need support – in providing adequate conditions (primarily time and financial resources) for further successful work. Certainly, appropriate financial funds are necessary for successful research. However, it is not the only condition. Scientific work demands time and devotion. If a university teacher is overloaded by lectures and other teaching and/or administrative duties, there is no possibility for high-quality research. Hence, there is a need for a suitable balance across the different types of university staff activities. Although all of us are primarily personally responsible for time-management in our life, there is a huge responsibility also on our institutions to carefully organise and evaluate staff workload, as well as to incorporate breaks and leave such as writing retreats, sabbaticals, study visits to other institutions for the purpose of further specialisation or research that may not be performed at our home institution, exchanges with an intention of getting new experiences and widening horizons through job shadowing etc. Institutions must have an understanding of the needs of their employees, not least the ones that may not be satisfied in their own work place. Employers need to accept that physical absence from one's home institution does not mean absence from one's job. On the contrary, the work of academic staff is always in their minds and therefore it is brought with them in their professional leave and mobility which frequently results in added value through enhanced staff quality and increased satisfaction. Because of a commitment to the bettering of their own reputation and ranking, institutions have to find a way (although it is not costless) to enable such leave and mobility without remorse or making staff on leave feel guilt towards the employer or other colleagues.

This case study has predominantly considered WRLT support through staff needs and development toward successful WRLT. Students' learning activity has not been separately analysed thoroughly. However, students' learning is considered indirectly, through the huge significance of teachers/teaching quality. No doubt both analysed universities, having education as the core purpose and essence of their existence, provide other types of learning support (such as spatial and ICT resources) that are continuously improving and modernising.

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CASE STUDY OF CENTRALISED SUPPORT - SLOVENIA

INTRODUCTION

Since Slovenia's independence in 1991, the higher education system has changed tremendously. During the past decades, Slovenia as a Member State of the European Union has actively participated in the Bologna process of the higher education reforms. In line with the unification of the European Higher Education Area, higher education strategies have focused on quality assurance. Consequently, Slovenia has taken up the commitment to comply with the standards and quality guidelines laid down by the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

This Slovenia Case Study is based on analysis of the state-of-play with regards the institutional and legislation frameworks, and relevant strategic documents and data. These were compiled from published reports, as well as from various on-line sources. Additionally, the authors were informed by discussions with various stakeholders from across the university leadership and colleagues in order to identify similarities and differences between institutional guidelines and personal experiences in practice.

Against this background, the case study provides a review of higher education institutions with emphasis on the case study of the University of Maribor, aiming at identifying key efforts of centralisation of institutional supports and integration into the established European higher education system. In addition, it highlights the interoperability and synergies across centralised supports delivered by various Faculties and other University members. Thus, the study analyses current conditions for the implementation of quality assurance processes within the existing institutional systems. Special attention is paid to challenges and opportunities associated with the introduction of innovative ICT models.

BACKGROUND TO THE CASE STUDY

The Slovenia case study is based on documents, guidelines and requirements associated with institutional and legislative frameworks of higher education (hereinafter referred to as HE), specifically documents concerning EU strategies and national policies. Further, it focuses on presentation of a specific case study of the University of Maribor (UM), based on regulatory documents, reviews, online reports and information leaflets, most thereof accessible on the UM website. Additionally, informal discussions with colleagues and members of the UM leadership were held to identify similarities and differences between the institutional systems and personal experiences. The aim of this case study is to identify centralised institutional models to support writing, research, learning and teaching, as well as relevant key initiatives to promote high quality standards across the UM environment.

Since 1991, the role and institutional framework of Slovenian HE has changed significantly. After 1999, the HE system was gradually restructured to a three-cycle model according to the Bologna process. The first Bologna programmes were introduced in the academic year 2005-2006. Additionally, the confirmation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention ensured the comparability of standards and HE qualifications in line with the EU HE area (Šubic, 2016). In 2010, all study programmes in Slovenia were adapted to the requirements of the Bologna Declaration (University of Maribor, 2019).

In 1993, the Higher Education Act already introduced some procedures of self-evaluation as an obligation for all the HE institutions. The umbrella document, declared by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Slovenia (MESS), is the Resolution on the National Higher Education Programme 2011-2020 (RNHEP). RNHEP promotes knowledge as public good, and higher education as public responsibility (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Slovenia, 2011). On this basis, the National Qualifications Framework was set up, followed by the establishment of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (SQAA). The role of the SQAA is declared as to permanently develop and monitor the accreditation and external and internal evaluation processes. For this purpose, the SQAA introduced a range of instruments and criteria for the procedures of quality assessment. Complementary to the SQAA, the Slovenian Research Agency established special mechanisms with emphasis on support for science and research (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Slovenia, 2011). Quality assurance is a new paradigm supported institutionally by the UM and its members. The focus is on the annual procedure of self-evaluation that incorporates critical reflections on writing, research, learning and teaching. The process includes the monitoring of the students' achievements, and the periodic reviews of existing programmes, as a basis for preparing an Action Plan with corrective measures and their implementation. The self-evaluation report is prepared by teams of various UM members in collaboration with representatives of stakeholders and students.

PROFILE OF THE INSTITUTION

In Slovenia, the HE study programmes are offered by public and private institutions comprising four public universities, one public independent institution, one International Association of Universities, and 44 private institutions. The MESS maintains the public register of all accredited institutions and study programmes that offer state-approved and accredited study programmes (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Slovenia, 2019). The SQAA is providing and monitoring the procedures relevant to the periodic quality assurance assessment.

The UM is the second largest and oldest Slovenian university, after the University of Ljubljana, established by the Republic of Slovenia in 1975. The roots of the Maribor HE institutions date back more than 150 years. Gradually, several HE institutions joined the primarily established educational college. Currently, the UM comprises 17 Faculties and has approximately 15,000 students. It also includes two support units, the University Library Maribor, and from 2000, the Student Dormitories. In the academic year 2017/2018, the UM Faculties offered 28 professional programmes, 49 undergraduate programmes, 70 master programmes, 2 consecutive master programmes, and 36 PhD programmes. They are conducted as full-time and part-time university programmes leading to the award of diplomas, and credential programmes leading to the award of certificates. From the 1980s, the City of Maribor has grown into an important HE Centre, a University City, setting a milestone in the decentralisation of the Slovenian HE area.

The mission of the UM emphasises the ethical principles of honesty, curiosity, creativity, freedom of thought, co-operation and knowledge transfer in the fields of science, art and education. It operates as a public institution in accordance with the principles of autonomy of all the UM members based on independent organisational arrangements, development of study programmes and research, and human resource management. Executive power is represented by the Rector, assisted by six Vice-Rectors, and the Secretary General. The highest academic and professional body is the UM Senate, comprising Deans and Deputy-Deans, academic officials, researchers, and representatives of the Student Council. The decision-making body is the UM Management Board. The Student Council, led by the Vice-Rector Student, plays important role in the decision making of student related issues at all levels (University of Maribor, 2019).

Generally, teaching and learning processes at the UM are conducted in the traditional manner as a combination of lectures and tutorial/laboratory classes, enhanced with the ICT-tool Moodle, and in specific joint-programmes, using blended/e-learning. Problem-oriented project work has been generally proved as a very successful mechanism, especially in case of interdisciplinary oriented degree programmes. The UM teachers, teaching assistants, and early-stage researchers are carrying out high-quality basic and applied research, predominantly in the framework of scientific and research programmes and projects, funded by national and EU-funds. The UM research community endeavours to conduct research and development projects based on the collaboration between the UM and the economic environment.

OVERVIEW OF CENTRALISED SUPPORTS

Concerning centralised support, it needs to be pointed out that, according to the RNHEP, quality assurance is primarily the responsibility of the HE institutions themselves (MESS, 2011). To this end, the UM Quality Assessment Committee (QAC) was established to monitor and conduct institutional and programme evaluations at the UM and its members. The main objective of these processes is the assessment of quality, effectiveness and efficiency of didactic work, science and research, and artistic work. From 2003, the QAC functions as a permanent advisory body of the UM Senate. The QAC Committee comprises 25 members, including representatives of the UM academic and administration staff, and of the Student Council. The QAC monitors the provision of self-evaluation reports, prepared by all the UM members on an annual basis. In January, the results are summarised in the UM Annual Report, which is presented to the academic community and published on the official UM website (University of Maribor, 2012).

Regarding quality assurance goals, the UM centralised supports focus on the integration processes of all HE areas, especially in science and research. The UM teams with different institutions to collaborate with the aim of achieving research excellence. With this in mind, efforts are made to support the integration of early-stage researchers, complementary doctoral programmes, and high-quality research equipment and infrastructure. In parallel, Faculties independently implement the teaching and research activities. Special attention is paid to academic writing and publishing, with the record on citation in high quality journals, and patents as prerequisites for the academic status of teachers and researchers. One of the key indicators of quality assurance is an adequate ICT-system. In this respect, the centralised UM Computer Centre manages and maintains the ICT-infrastructure of the entire UM environment.

The mission and tasks of the library are implemented by the Central University Library Maribor (CULM), which is a member of the UM. The CULM constitutes the UM Library and Information System, jointly with the University Library Units established within Faculties. The task of this IT-System is to provide information on academic achievements of the UM academic staff and to constantly process the records on publishing. Specific commitment is dedicated to personal bibliographies, which serve as certificates of quality achievements by teachers and researchers.

Integration of students in the UM environment is exemplified by excellent communication with the HE management and is of particular importance for quality assurance. The Student Council is a centralised UM body that represents the Student Councils of the Faculties and ensures the involvement of its representatives in almost all Faculty- and UM-bodies. Student Councils of UM Faculties conduct and monitor student inquiries each year, assessing the performance of Faculty staff and services, thus providing important input for self-evaluation reports.

INTEROPERABILITY AND SYNERGIES

The UM Department for Quality and Sustainable Development (DQSD), established in 2011, contributes most to the interoperability across different supports to quality assurance at the UM and its members. These include, among others, a set of indicators as a basis for annual self-evaluation to assess the HE facilities and equipment, teaching and learning performance, international activities, research and development, and the quality of human resources (University of Maribor, 2019).

In view of the operability of the UM, the main rules are presented in the Quality Manual, including competences, working methods, and measures for quality monitoring and improvement of the UM environment. Special attention is paid to human resources, with job descriptions, required level of education, work experience, knowledge, skills, and responsibilities. Additionally, the Academic Personnel Manual sets out in detail the issues of employment contracts, rights and obligations, including the profile of researchers in line with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (University of Maribor, 2012).

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Slovenia (2011) constantly encourages HE institutions to organise special development centres to improve the didactic training for achieving excellence in writing, research, learning and teaching. In the past decade, the UM established several support centres, which are partly centralised, and partly dispersed within Faculties, according to the expertise and potentials for financial support within research and development projects. First of all, the centralised Career Centre of the UM was established in 2015, which provides services dedicated to students, graduates, teachers and administrative staff. Second was the Centre for Life-Long Education, established as an organisational unit of the Faculty of Arts and financially supported by several international projects. This centre conducts various programmes of life-long education and international co-operation, including the mobility of students and the UM staff.

Of the established units, the one that is currently most active is the Teaching Support Centre, established by the UM Department of Education and Student Affairs in the framework of the development project Didact.UM, which commenced in 2017 based on public tender 'The Call for Proposals Integrating the Use of Information and Communication Technology in the Higher Education Teaching Process' under the umbrella of the EU co-funding. The main activities of the Teaching Support Centre are dedicated to the promotion of innovative and flexible forms of teaching and learning, as well as quality career guidance of students. It provides comprehensive support and assistance to the didactic use of ICT-tools, including their implementation in writing, research, learning and teaching at all levels of the UM. In this respect, the Centre contributes to continuous updating and upgrading of knowledge, skills and competences provided to the UM teaching staff (University of Maribor, 2019).

Students and their commitment to the UM environment have an ever more important role in quality assurance. To this end, the UM provides specialised training, developing specific models of active participation of students in quality assurance processes.

OPPORTUNITIES

According to the UM strategic guidelines, quality assurance is a tool for identifying advantages, weaknesses and shortcomings, as well as challenges and opportunities for improvements of the UM environment. Centralised supports are dedicated to priority tasks, including issues of internationalization, i.e. mobility, joint degree programmes, summer schools, visiting professors; implementation of programmes in English, etc. Supports encourage the initiatives and creativity of students, in particular, project work, and the tutoring and mentoring. Supports have existed at all Faculties, despite the differing aptitude of mentors in overcoming traditional methods of teaching and research, and relations between students, teachers, and UM institutions.

Internationalisation emphasises mobility and centralised support for exchange of experiences and innovations in writing, research, learning and teaching is critical. Academic exchange of UM staff and students is implemented and monitored through more than 500 inter-university agreements between the UM and various international partner institutions. In most cases, they are conducted under the umbrella of the EU Erasmus+ programme co-funding. From 1995, active exchange of the UM students and teachers runs also within the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies - CEEPUS.

Currently, the UM intensively promotes different centralised supports to services for strengthening the co-operation between the UM and the local and regional economic environment. One such intention is to improve financial performance of the UM management, with emphasis on quality infrastructure and equipment of laboratories. The UM is addressing the problem of unclear financial perspectives due to insufficient public funding of science and research, generally through the introduction of new mechanisms for increasing the MEES support.

CHALLENGES

Regarding accountability and quality of education, the HE management has experienced several major changes of the top-down and bottom-up approaches, from regulation to evaluation. The self-evaluation processes require continuously maintaining, promoting and improving the quality of education and research considered as decisive in terms of decision making and development planning of the UM.

Currently, the UM emphasises challenges of internationalisation, which are interdependent with quality assurance. Improvements should contribute to the expansion of knowledge, communication and competences, and develop new innovative up-to-date study programmes. To this end, active participation of all members of the academic community, including students, teachers, researchers, and management is prerequisite. Collaboration with international institutions promotes an increase in the number of joint degree programmes, with priorities on postgraduate and doctoral programmes, linked with transnational projects and activities. Inconstant and inadequate funding of science and research is considered a serious obstacle in the long-term perspective.

Centralised supports include the recent establishment of the UM Digital Innovation Hub – DIH. The mission of DIH emphasises the development of a regional network of research, industry and business support organisations. DIH was organised by the UM to act as a focal point for the East Cohesion Region of Slovenia and the City of Maribor as the centre of the region. DIH's main task is to connect the actors of the economy sector as partners in the digital transformation processes. DIH was created as a collaborative community that focuses on ICT and new business models dedicated to raising the competitiveness and co-development, including testing, and launching new products and services.

PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIONS, INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Undoubtedly, the external and internal evaluation processes provide valuable experiences in facing critical comments by third parties to the members of the UM management, teaching and supporting staff and students. However, according to the EU Country Report: Slovenia (Šubic, 2014), these processes include a number of deficiencies, including the size of the institution, poor integration, weak responsiveness of teachers, students and graduates, and poor leadership support. Critics additionally pointed out the insufficient resources for implementing student-centred teaching and learning, and the need for more intensive focus on science and research.

The danger of an over-regulating HE model is the most common remark against a generally positive perception of the HE area in Slovenia. In this regard, good news is the novel transition from the programme to institutional accreditation, started in 2019. The responsibility for conducting and monitoring the evaluation processes is transferred from the SQAA to the HE institutions. This enables the UM to act autonomously in quality assurance processes, based on the self-evaluation reports and action plans, prepared annually by the UM members. Nevertheless, as it turns out, the new evaluation models are almost copies of those conducted by the SQAA. Novelties are linked with evaluation teams, recruited by the UM QAC, including representatives of the management, teaching, and supporting staff, and students. Relevant data are collected on an annual basis, from the UM offices for study affairs, international co-operation, personnel services, libraries, enrolment and information centres, student surveys and from the common data sources of the UM Computer Centre database. The weaknesses and shortcomings identified constitute the opportunities for improvements and elimination of negative impacts. For instance, the new centralised evaluation models should be sufficiently flexible to permanently warrant the adaptability to new circumstances.

This case study was implemented in line with the UM slogan, "Create your future" (University of Maribor, 2019). It corroborates the concept that the most important challenge of quality assurance in writing, research, learning and teaching is raising the awareness of quality values and involvement of all the stakeholders within the HE area.

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OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF INSTITUTIONAL CENTRALISED SUPPORTS WITHIN THE EHEA

INTRODUCTION

COST Action 15221 addresses the challenge of creating synergy among the increasingly more specialised and centralised supports for four key higher education activities, namely *research, writing, teaching and learning*. In this sense, our Action will address the capitalisation of their shared territories and common ground and thus, classify as 'frontier taxonomies' such common ground in terms of shared purposes, processes, knowledge, values and skills among centralized institutional supports. Aiming at offering the most advantageous models and practices for backing up these four areas, two key factors, such as the new technologies and assessments of the current institutional support are under study. The goal of the present paper is to deploy a case study in a Spanish university having in mind one of the objectives associated with the Action, which is to classify the elements that have typically led key informants to success, effectiveness and productivity across the four areas of research, writing, learning and teaching. The present study has been carried out by reviewing university documents and policies, both the public website of the institution and its corresponding intranet for students and their teaching faculty, and gathering data from selected literature available on the subject matter. The observation of this case study in the Spanish context could be of interest when trying to figure out the current situation of scholars working in a multilingual state university in terms of institutional models towards cohesive teaching, learning, research and writing development in the 21st century globalised academic world.

BACKGROUND TO THE CASE STUDY

The present case study is informed by public and internal information available to students and teaching faculty at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) in Spain. In addition, selected literature available on the topic has been discussed while describing the current situation of our institution. First, I have included a brief history of the UAB and I have explained its model, which is based on the respect of three basic principles: autonomy, participation and social commitment. Second, a description of the UAB and its organisation into teaching, research, international activities and structure has been included. Third, I have depicted our institution's *Plan for Languages,* its main goals and the UAB internationalisation strategies based on three fundamental lines of action: a) mobility, b) collaboration and co-operation, and c) the attraction of talent. Fourth, I have indicated the interoperability and synergies within the Department of English and German Philology and its emphasis on developing students' critical skills, oral and written communication and the use of new technologies.

PROFILE OF THE INSTITUTION

The history of the UAB begins on 6th June 1968, when the decree on the creation of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) was officially promulgated. One month later, the first four faculties were established: Philosophy and Arts, Medicine, Science, and Economics. Teaching activities at the UAB began in October 1968 in two of the new centres: the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts**,** which was located in the Monastery of Sant Cugat del Vallès, and the Faculty of Medicine**,** which was located at the Hospital de Santa Creu i Sant Pau in Barcelona. The hospital recovered its condition as a university hospital and became the first centre of clinical training of the UAB. The following academic year, in 1969/70, classes began at the Faculty of Science**,** also located at the Sant Pau Hospital, and the Faculty of Economics and Business Studies, located at the Language School of Barcelona, in the Drassanes neighbourhood.

The initial stages of the UAB ended with the creation of the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Information Sciences in 1971, the University School of Translators and Interpreters in 1972 and the "Sant Cugat" University School of Teachers in 1973. At the same time, in February 1969, land was bought in the Bellaterra district of the municipality of Cerdanyola del Vallès, the place of the future university campus, the UAB's Bellaterra Campus**.**

Since its first years, the UAB has strived to set the foundations for a university model based on the respect for the basic principles of **autonomy, participation, and social commitment**. With regard to the process of adaptation to the European Higher Education Area, the UAB decided right from the beginning to take on a process of convergence as an opportunity for the internationalisation of the university, thanks to the creation of competitive, high quality academic programmes which promote the mobility of students and faculty.

Though still a little under 50 years old, the UAB has already consolidated itself amongst the 200 best universities in the world, within the main university rankings, and is located within the top 10 new universities with greatest international projection and prestige. As to the UAB in rankings, it should be mentioned that in recent years, this university has seen recognition for its efforts in promoting quality in teaching, in attracting international talent and in obtaining a growing impact in research, together with progressive improvement in its classifications in the most prestigious and influential international rankings. Thus, the UAB occupies an outstanding position among Spanish universities in world rankings, such as the QS World University Rankings (QS WUR), the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE WUR) and the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU). The UAB also ranks as one of the best young universities according to specific rankings made for universities less than half a century old by QS and Times Higher Education.

The directive plan outlines the objectives and lines of action taken by the UAB; it is the tool that aids the articulation of the completion of the electoral programme of the Governing Team and specifies university policies, facilitating the establishment of priorities and decision-making processes. Results are periodically evaluated and they serve to revise the original plan with the aim of consolidating, modifying or adjusting the original strategy when needed.

1.1 The UAB in figures
I have listed here the main data about the UAB in terms of **a) Teaching, b) Research, c) International Activities and d) Structure**

a) Teaching
    88 Bachelor's degrees (2017-2018)
    133 Official master's (2017-2018)
    172 UAB Master Degrees (2015-2016)
    602 Lifelong programmes (2015-2016)
    26,155 Undergraduates (24,300 full-time equivalent) (2016-2017)
    3,078 Official master's students (2016-2017)
    2,755 UAB master students (2015-2016)
    3,655 Lifelong learning students (2015-2016)
    6,575 First-year undergraduates (2016-2017)
    2,433 New income official master students (2016-2017)
    4,861 Graduating students (2015-2016)
    2,050 Official master graduates (2015-2016)
    5,508 Undergraduates at affiliated centres (2016-2017)
    740 Official master students in related centres (2016-2017)
    1,343 First-year undergraduates at affiliated centres (2016-2017)
    516 New income official master students in affiliated centres (2016-2017)
    1,239 Graduating students at affiliated centres (2015-2016)
    416 Master degree graduates at ascribed centres (2015-2016)
    22 MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) offered at Coursera (2016-2017)
    370,246 MOOC students (2016-2017)

b) Research
    65 PhD programmes (2017-2018)
    16 Industrial doctorates (2016)
    4,807 PhD students (2016-2017)
    1,072 PhD theses (2016-2017)
    58 European research projects (2016)
    252 National research projects (2016)
    641 Research agreements (2016)
    6 European Research Council (ERC) grants for UAB and Esfera UAB-CEI
    47 Patents claimed (2016)
    8 New companies at Parc de Recerca UAB, including 3 spin-off (2015)
    71.2% Research and teaching staff with on date research recognisements (2016)
    616 Training research staff (2016)
    25.3% Research and teaching staff team-leaders in research projects (2016)
    4,047 Articles published in indexed journals (2016, Clarivate Analytics WOK)

c) International

    1,407 Foreign bachelor's degree students (2016-2017)
    5.37% Foreign bachelor's degree students (2016-2017)
    1,148 Official Master degrees' foreign students (2016-2017)
    37.29% UAB Master degrees' foreign students' ratio (2016-2017)
    1,174 UAB Master degrees' foreign students (2015-2016)
    42.75% UAB Master degrees' foreign students ratio (2015-2016)
    1,679 PhD foreign students (2016-2017)
    34.41% PhD foreign students' ratio (2016-2017)
    1,200 UAB students in mobility programmes (2016-2017)
    17.2% Graduates with training abroad (2014-2015)

1,251 Foreign students in mobility programmes (2016-2017)
3,038 Foreign students in the Study Abroad programmes (2016-2017)
227 Foreign teaching and research staff (2016)
5.8% Foreign teaching and research staff (2015)
25% English-taught master's degrees (2016-2017)
8 Erasmus Mundus Master programmes (2015-2016)
43.7% Papers from international collaborations (Scimago SIR 2015)

d) Structure

3,757 total teaching and research staff (2016)
2,689 teaching and research staff full-time equivalent (2016)
1,520 total permanent research and teaching staff (2016)
2,344 administrative staff (2016)
13 UAB teaching centres
11 ascribed teaching centres
57 departments
264 consolidated research groups (2016)
24 research centres
7 UAB research institutes
37 inculcated research institutes
6 general services for university community
63 research aid services

Overview of the centralised supports

The objective of the UAB Plan for Languages is to provide a strategic framework for the language policy during the period 2016-2020. In this sense, the Language Policy delegated by the Governing Council monitors the Plan for Languages and the Language Service of the UAB. This Language Service provides key professional support for the plan and the language policy representative for each centre and it is the reference for channelling questions and queries about language matters.

As a Catalan university, the UAB is responsible for ensuring the use of the Catalan language and the production and dissemination and improvement in scientific production in Catalan. On the other hand, Spanish is the other official language of the UAB and a centre of reference in Spanish philology. Together with English, it is essential for capturing talent and building loyalty and for achieving the university's objectives of international projection and excellence.

While the role of English as the lingua franca of the international community is clear in the international projection strategy of the university, French also plays an important role geo-strategically and also for reasons of proximity and tradition. Moreover, French, German and Italian are languages of reference in certain fields of knowledge and professional environments, while other professions demand multilingual competence. Currently, Eastern Asian languages, such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean are also important because of the university's strategic interest in that part of the world.

Another major asset of the UAB is its linguistic capital: the concept of universities has always been linked to multilingualism as a factor for enrichment and contact among the people who generate and consume knowledge. Therefore, together, languages and cultures enrich the university community and the courses, centres, institutes, research groups and services related to languages are the source of research, transfer, knowledge and innovation.

As previously stated, in its mission, the UAB defines itself as a public Catalan university with an international outlook. For the university, internationalisation is one of the tools to achieve its objectives in offering quality education, research and knowledge transfer. The institution's internationalisation strategy is based on three fundamental lines of action: **a)** *mobility*, **b)** *collaboration and co-operation*, and **c)** *the attraction of talent*. In the first place, *mobility* gives our students, lecturers and administration staff the chance to work in prestigious universities mainly through exchange programmes. Secondly, collaboration with other universities and institutions permits students and lecturers to discover and propose new teaching experiences and open new fields of research together with other prestigious universities. In addition, *co-operation* with developing countries contributes to the construction of a more solid university committed to social reality. Finally, the *attraction of talent* aims to select the best students, especially at the Master's degree and PhD level, and attract the best lecturers from around the world. To foster these objectives, the UAB places special importance on **strategic alliances** with other universities through a variety of **consortiums and networks**.

Interoperability and synergies

The UAB is organised according to the five following structures:
- Teaching centres
- Departments
- University Chairs
- UAB Research Park
- University administration

As to the UAB departments, we must explain here that they are units in charge of organising and developing the activities of the teaching and research staff. Each department corresponds to a field of knowledge, and it is divided into even more specific areas. The UAB has over sixty departments, which cover all disciplines of knowledge. To be more precise, they are**:** 1) Health sciences, 2) Experimental and Technological sciences, 3) Social sciences and 4) Humanities.

In this vein, **the Department of English and Germanic Studies** represents a wide range of research interests such as experimental phonology, women writers, socio-linguistics, the interface between cinema and literature, corpus linguistics, psycho-linguistics, Post-Colonial literature and second language acquisition. We combine this with a strong emphasis on creating a quality learning experience in the classroom, as reflected in our ongoing participation in the university's Teaching Enhancement programmes. Our courses offer the following five specializations: 1) English Studies, 2) English and Catalan, 3) English and Classics, 4) English and French and 5) English and Spanish. More precisely, the Degree in English Studies provides students with broad knowledge of the English language, literature and culture. In this sense, it trains up professionals capable of working in the sectors of teaching, research, publishing and management of international communication.

UAB graduates in English Studies acquire a high level in language, linguistics, and literature, have key knowledge of historical and cultural context, and profound **critical skills**. In this sense, special attention is given to cultivating teamwork, **oral communication** to different audiences, and the **use of new technologies**. With regards our graduates' career options, we could say that the traditional profession for graduates is teaching in public or private education centres: secondary, high school, higher education or language academies. Moreover, there is an increasing diversification towards other sectors related to: **1)** production of **teaching** materials, 2) translation and interpreting, 3) multilingual institutional communication in businesses, **4) publishing**, 5) libraries and language departments, 6) language technology applications, 7) tourism, 8) public relations and international relations, 9) cultural counselling and management of documentation tasks for publishers in collaboration with journals and cultural supplements, **10) co-ordination and planning** of cultural activities for companies, foundations and public institutions, and **11) academic research**.

OPPORTUNITIES

Teaching in higher education has experienced many challenges since World War II but there were two periods when the role of teaching was paid more attention than usual: a) in the late 1960s and 1970s and b) from 2000 onwards. The concept developed by Wilhelm von Humboldt for the University of Berlin (established in 1810) is often viewed as the starting point of modern university where there exists a close link between **teaching and research** (*Einheit von Forschung und Lehre*) and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake and academic freedom (*Einsamkeit und Freiheit*) as the basis for high quality and a desirable link between **higher education and society**. In addition, the concept of community of students and teaching staff (*Gemeinschaft der Lehrenden und Lehrer*), which was not so often mentioned before, is very important and definitely plays a key role in modern education.

The idea of **research** as a pivotal function of universities has spread all over the world, but the notions on the functions of **teaching and learning** have continued to vary substantially in Europe and have been influenced by: a) the Humboldtian university (German-speaking regions, The Netherlands, Nordic countries and some Central and Eastern European countries), b) the English ideal of "socialising the gentlemen" (in United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland), and c) the Napoleonian university, with lesser degree of link between **teaching and research** (Francophone regions and Spain). There was an insufficient concern about the students' thoughts and needs. However, with the expansion of higher education "non-traditional students" appeared with very specific needs of employment sectors and consequently, there was a restructuring of the higher education system with the steady establishment or extension of units for **"staff development"**, **"teaching and learning"**, and **academic staff training** with more institutionalised student guidance and counselling.

The Bologna process (1999) towards the convergence of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) aimed at the creation of a coherent, compatible and competitive framework, capable of attracting both European and overseas students and scholars from all over the world. All these changes in education triggered stronger curricular coordination and regulations in countries with traditional "less structured" study programmes. The access to higher education for adult learning and vocationally trained students increased by creating special programmes for them and the approach to teaching became more interdisciplinary, implementing learning in projects, internships, etc. More international student mobility emerged: European Union Joint Study Programmes since 1976, establishment of the Erasmus programme since 1987, and the strategic objectives of the Sorbonne (1998) and Bologna (1999) declarations, making Europe more attractive for students from other continents and facilitating intra-European student (and later) staff mobility.

One outstanding European Initiative is the *Erasmus Exchange Program* for both scholars and administrative staff working in Universities. In this sense, this new higher education paradigm has three main goals: **a) competition**, **b) employability** and **c) mobility** of learners and it is the main step for a crucial change in teaching methodology at a university level: moving from a *teacher-oriented* to *student-oriented* by 2010.

CHALLENGES

After the European Convergence of University study plans across Europe, teachers' previous roles and tasks changed dramatically in terms of (lecturers) not only becoming responsible for content learning and specific discipline abilities but also for helping students develop essential and key competencies for their future careers within the professional world. Thereby, the formative and educative university of this "new" *knowledge-based* society aimed at professionals, citizens, individuals with integral formation, educated, responsible, reflective, critical and adaptable. The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) teaching practice has evolved, then, from being *content-oriented* to aiming at student's comprehensive formation and leading towards *lifelong learning.*

BEFORE	AFTER
● Teaching objectives	✔ Learning objectives
● Learning information	✔ Learning competencies
● Teacher-oriented	✔ Student-oriented
● Passivity	✔ Activities to learn
● The teacher as "the main character"	✔ The teacher as a "Guide"
● Summative assessment	✔ Formative assessment
● Individualism	✔ Teaching team

Table 1. European Higher Education Area (EHEA) methodological changes

This change of teaching methodology implied a change of teaching practices and the incorporation of new roles and tasks for the teachers summarized, as follows:

1) Interpersonal: Teachers are responsible for promoting: **criticism**, **motivation** and trust among students, foster their **cultural diversity** awareness and consider their individual needs.

2) Methodological: Teachers apply learning and assessment tools, which are suitable to **students' needs** and according to the **learning objectives** of each subject in particular. Lecturers consider, very especially, the use of **Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)** in their tuition to improve the teaching and learning processes of their students at University level.

3) Communicative: Teachers develop efficient and correct bi-directional processes by **receiving, interpreting, producing and transmitting** messages through a wide range of possibilities within the learning and teaching context (i.e. the use of Digital platforms, such as, the Virtual Campus or a Moodle Classroom)

4) Management & Planning: Teachers **design, guide and develop content** and formation as well as assessment activities to later evaluate outcomes and **seek improvement** of the teaching and learning processes.

5) Teamwork: Teachers co-operate with each other and participate in groups by taking responsibility, and are all committed towards the fulfilment of the tasks and functions in relation to their **common objectives** by following protocols and using the available resources.

6) Innovation: Teachers create and apply new knowledge, approaches, methods and resources in education practices **to achieve excellence** in the learning and teaching processes.

In fact, after all these incorporations to the teaching methodologies, language curricula have been reoriented, language departments have been reconfigured, and study plans have been revamped, all with the ultimate aim of bringing about a much yearned-for revitalisation of language teaching at a tertiary level (Shunin & Lobanova, 2008:135). In other words, we have experienced what Mehisto (2008) defines as a period of disjuncture, characterized by the tension between the previous order and a new approach, which changes the *status quo*. Indeed, this intense period of reform in higher education still requires a change of perspective in both stakeholders involved: teachers and students, as the transition from **learning by instruction to learning by construction** needs time and cohesive teaching, learning, research and writing development.

Since our profession is becoming more and more demanding, with the passing of time one feels under certain pressure as being proficient at the four different areas (Learning, Research, Teaching and Writing) which are, more or less connected, making us the "Leonardo da Vinci" of the 21st Century. We should consider the potential costs of becoming or targeting being "stellar scholars". There are national and

regional systems of accreditation in Spain, in other words, the national quality agency: Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (ANECA) in Madrid and the local agency of University quality in Catalonia, located in Barcelona: Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya (AQU). These agencies were created to assess the teaching, research (and now management) quality of our Faculty. In this sense, our teaching staff undo teaching evaluation every 5 years and research evaluation every 6 years. In the case that they do not meet the high standards that they are supposed to, in each evaluation lecturers/researchers are not given the small amount of money (as a monthly bonus in their payroll) and they are given an "extra" number of hours to teach when they fail their research assessment.

PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIONS, INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Now that students' formation has evolved into generic, specific and cross-curricular competencies, the latter concerning the implementation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) - inside and outside - the current classroom dynamics, as "teachers need to pull back from being the donors of knowledge in a passive learning context to become facilitators in a student-led scenario" (Pérez-Cañado, 2011:21). In this respect, the role of didactic materials and resources available within the ICTs environment figure prominently as they are pivotal in bringing about this reconfiguration of teacher and student roles, and in operating the shift to a learner-centred pedagogy of student's autonomy (Pérez Gómez et al. 2009 c). However, we should mention here that the potential of technological or digital competencies for enhancing the student-centred learning process has been slightly underscored by the official EHEA literature being digital competencies *a must* in our 21st century context.

To sum up, there have been many changes in the study plans (curriculum) within the EHEA studies and several strategic, re-structuring, technical and academic proposals have been made accordingly, aiming at enhancing students' linguistic competence component. Thereby, there is a current special emphasis on *Written Competence* and *Assessment*. As we all know, using a certain methodology implies ensuring that our students reach the goals or objectives that we have set for a subject in particular. In addition, our didactic approach must take into consideration our students' profile, their needs as learners and future professionals and this is certainly achieved by connecting theory with practice. Therefore, teachers should plan the subjects to teach, taking into account both the nature of the contents, the field of knowledge and the strict criteria in terms of ECTS philosophy and guidelines**.**

Finally, current academic and scientific activities are closely connected with teaching methodology and, more precisely, the areas of teaching Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP), for example: professional language and skills, e-learning, computer-assisted language learning, motivation in language learning , language testing, and the like.

I could say that in my institution there are two main units of support in the end, one dealing with the mastering of languages (Servei de Llengües) and another one focusing on the design and development of research applications for grants and projects (most recently available). In addition, it is an institutional concern to implement CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodology in several faculties and, therefore, they help teachers by translating their materials and giving them specific courses to teach in a foreign language (most commonly English). Recently, the institution has incorporated an offer of several specific courses on more academic writing and developing research articles because of the great demand.

The English and German Departments do not make an extensive use of such units of support (specially the linguistic one) since all of us are English Philologists or/and translators and, thus, there is no need to have our materials translated. However, we do attend formation courses, once in a while, on teaching methodologies, co-operative learning, etc. as we can implement such techniques in our daily tuition and these courses are also recognised as formation hours by our Quality Department and they "count" positively in our 5 year teaching assessment. However, more visibility on the research support available would benefit our 6-year research assessment as many of us often have doubts on how to present our documentation, establish our priorities in publication (JCR, Scopus index), etc. It was only recently that teachers are supposed to be "stellar" researchers, too and this is a very time-consuming activity that we

have to carry out mostly outside our working/teaching hours. Therefore, we might "sacrifice" leisure or family time to achieve this other goal in our profession not to become invisible or "penalised" with more hours of teaching (although teaching is our vocation and passion).

Finally, I could conclude that our compulsory evaluation at teaching, research and management levels is what makes us succeed (more or less) in the academia. Our institution has been prioritising research over teaching lately and we could say that this is a regional, national and possibly international trend. Success exists when a lecturer is capable of organizing his/her time to publish internationally, carrying out research, being responsible of several managerial tasks (coordination, secretary, etc.), and teaching at a high standard. This eventually may cause faculty to feel overwhelmed, frustrated and stressed as this professional "triangle" is like having three jobs in one. Several years ago, there was an ongoing discussion whether it would be more productive and beneficial for all (a *win-win* situation) to organise teacher's duties according to their preferences, namely 70% research + 30% teaching or 50% research + 50% teaching besides from including compulsory management tasks in each teacher's plan but that idea did not seem to progress or it was rather complicated to assess and plan accordingly. Maybe, it was not institutionally easy to handle nor feasible…

Even so, I do think that this would be a fairer system and would make workers more satisfied and happier with their job as, for me, an ideal institutional model of support would be one adapting to the different profiles of the present faculty in our universities nowadays. We are very proud that our institution is doing so well in World Rankings and, hence, policy makers and planners might wonder why things should be changed for the teaching staff when they work so well (especially in the hard sciences and the education field) but the truth is that if institutional structures and values were articulated following the above-mentioned principle, they would surely foster academic staff growth even much more in Spain.

We all know that to become a university teacher one has to prove teaching quality, research experience and management skills. However, by facilitating dedicated professional inclinations and practices, the present faculty would most likely feel less overwhelmed as they are now multitasking in the varied compulsory duties assigned. If they had the chance to choose their ratio within teaching, research and managerial duties, and deeply focus on that at which they are outstanding during their working hours, I am inclined to think that they would be even more productive than they are now. In turn, university rankings would probably be even higher and our Spanish students could benefit from an extraordinary motivated teaching staff and very specialised researchers in a wide range of subjects and areas of knowledge.

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CASE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

An important success factors in academic institutions is the satisfaction of teachers with the working conditions and their opportunities for professional self-realization, which ensures high effectiveness of the academic model. Where this model does not provide adequate support for teachers in their main areas of activity – writing, research, learning and teaching, then such an institution faces challenges associated with effectiveness. We decided to test this assumption in the case of University of Banja Luka (UBL) – the second largest university of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Three representatives of different categories of the UBL academic staff were interviewed, namely: an early stage teacher (teaching assistant); an experienced teacher (associate professor - docent); and a senior teacher (full professor). These deep interviews were used to study staff's perception of the existing institutional model through the individual lens, in order to realise its critical success factors, opportunities and challenges. It was found that the achievements of UBL are associated not so much with the institutional factors, but with an inner potential of teachers, their self-organisation, a collective cohesion, a supporting of the young teachers by senior professors, as well as a support from EU programmes. The interviews show that promising early stage and experienced teachers often have a desire to leave the UBL to work overseas. Hence, they look for opportunities to improve their English and support from international organisations. Where the institutions cannot provide the necessary support, the most talented teachers rely only on themselves and their networks/connections within and towards international projects.

BACKGROUND TO THE CASE STUDY

The case study was informed by a Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM) entitled "Exploring the performance of an academic institutional model: a case of Banja Luka" that was conducted in January 2019 at the University of Banja Luka (UBL) by Prof. Anatoliy Goncharuk, collaborating with Dr. Aleksandra Figurek.

To realise how to improve the model, it is necessary to find out what are its critical success factors (Disterheft et al., 2015), challenges and opportunities (Goncharuk 2015). For the academic model apparently, important success factors are the satisfaction of teachers with the working conditions (Bentea and Anghelache 2012), and their opportunities for professional self-realisation (Kudinov et al. 2018), which ensure high effectiveness of the model. The model of academic support should provide adequate support for teachers in their main areas of activity – writing, research, learning and teaching (Magennis and Farrell 2005); without this the institution's effectiveness may suffer. We decided to test this assumption on the case of University of Banja Luka (UBL).

Using a modified version of the COST Action 15221 questionnaire and preliminary developed template for the case study, three representatives of different categories of academic staff of the UBL were interviewed:

- one early stage teacher (teaching assistant);
- one experienced teacher (associate professor - docent);
- and one senior teacher (full professor).

The deep interviews helped us to study their perceptions of the existing institutional model by teachers through the individual lens and to realise its opportunities and challenges.

In addition, after the interviews, we held a meeting with the university administration to find out how much it is aware of the challenges that UBL teachers face in performing their teaching, learning, research, and writing.

PROFILE OF THE INSTITUTION

The University of Banja Luka (UBL) is a state-owned university and has more than a 40-year history. Currently it includes 17 faculties, is the leading higher education institution in the Republic of Srpska and the second largest one in the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are 811 fully employed professors and teaching assistants, the administration of the University totalling 559 employees. The current total number of students there is about 20,000.

The ratio of "students/teachers" at this university is quite high at 24.7 to 1. This indicates a high productivity and also a heavy teaching and supervising load on academic staff at the UBL. The ratio "administrators/teachers" at this university is quite high 0.69 to 1. This indicates the risks of hard bureaucratic procedures and high administrative pressure on academic staff at the UBL.

According to the Scopus database, during 2017 the UBL teachers published 180 articles in research journals and got 334 citations on their publications. Hence, on average 0.22 articles were published per teacher, and there were 0.41 citations per year.

These indicators on the one hand show a high productivity of teachers, each of which on average prepares about 25 students, but on the other hand, they suggest that improvements could be made in terms of the effectiveness of research and writing in the UBL.

Despite the Serbian language being dominant in the life and work of the University staff, in 2018 the UBL adopted the Strategy for Internationalisation. It defines the specific steps to be taken in the internationalisation of research, teaching, and support. In the same year the Confucius Institute was established at the UBL to promote Chinese language and culture.

In addition, the UBL has agreements on co-operation with 100 other higher education institutions. Contrary to the situation in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina where each of its 10 cantons has its own ministry of education and legislative power over higher education, higher education in Republika Srpska is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Government of Republika Srpska.

The full implementation of the Bologna Process at the UBL was initiated in the 2006/2007 academic year. Some faculties implemented the reform earlier. Since 2011 the UBL is a full member of the European University Association. It is also a member of the European Forest Institute and participates in TEMPUS, CEEPUS and the 7th Framework Programme. Through student exchange programmes, the university hosted students from Sapienza University of Rome, Plovdiv University, the University of Strasbourg, the University of Graz, the University of the District of Columbia, the University of Pristina in North Mitrovica and the University of Freiburg.

OVERVIEW OF THE CENTRALISED SUPPORTS OF WRITING, RESEARCH, LEARNING AND TEACHING

Three in-depth interviews separately with one teacher assistant, one associate professor, and one full professor gave us the opportunity to characterise the UBL institutional model of centralised supports of writing, research, learning, and teaching through the individual lens.

Support of teaching:
There is no teaching school or another special institutional support of teaching in the UBL. Especially early stage teachers lack this support from the university. However, a good attitude and mentoring from experienced colleagues (professors) helps them to overcome some difficulties in obtaining teaching skills. Besides, some of the experienced teachers have an opportunity for mobility abroad for teaching or attending foreign training schools thanks to the Erasmus + and other foreign or local government programmes on a competitive basis. So, experienced and leading teachers, who speak English, have chances to improve their teaching skills abroad. However, all the interviewed teachers complain about a lot of teaching hours (300+ per annum), which confirms a heavy teaching load on academic staff at the UBL.

Support of research:
At the time of this study, there were no research grants for teachers or projects from the UBL. However, local government supports researchers by grants on a competitive basis. Regretfully, it isn't enough to fully cover the cost of necessary equipment and materials for research in the UBL. Besides, this institutional model gives some assistance in data collecting and team support for early stage researchers. Also, the UBL provides a high level of freedom in research and cooperation with business for applied research and foreign academia for international research.

Support of writing/publishing:
The UBL provides competitive grants for publishing books by the academic staff. However, communication with staff indicates a very low level of proficiency in English among university professors. Only about 10% of invited teachers were able to interview in English, the others were ready to interview only in Serbian. In this state the UBL does not support English editing for papers and book writing. Also, there is generally a lack of funding for writing and publication in the UBL, e.g. for covering an open access publication fee. Generally, there are relatively low numbers of publications in Scopus (0.22 per professor in 2017) and low numbers of citations reflecting challenges re research and writing/publishing in the UBL.

Support of learning:
This kind of academic activity was evaluated by UBL teachers higher that other ones. The UBL actually organise a lot of the workshops with international speakers. Also there is a free English language training course for teachers from university. More opportunities are given by Erasmus+ and other EU programmes that provide mobility for learning abroad, visiting workshops and training schools in other European countries. However, the UBL doesn't provide internal teaching school or funding for teachers traveling to learn. Moreover, there isn't any funding to improve teaching and research skills in this country (B&H).

INTEROPERABILITY AND SYNERGIES

Considering the combination of all the four observed areas, namely writing, research, teaching and learning, the following traits/dispositions which influenced success were found as the most influential:

- for early stage teacher – optimism and positive attitude, willingness to take risks, strategic thinking and planning, openness to new experiences, and willingness to travel for work and live overseas;
- for experienced teacher – curiosity, and sound values – respect, equality, fairness, integrity;
- for senior teacher – optimism and positive attitude, and ability to problem solve.

Self-assessment by interviewed teachers on a ten-point scale showed that the overall scores of the interoperability and synergy between supports in the UBL are lower for male teachers (early stage and senior) – 7, and higher for a female teacher (experienced) – 8. However, if the early stage teacher, being an optimist, apparently hopes to leave to work abroad in the future, then the optimism of his senior colleague is regarding with solving current problems, without avoiding them by going overseas. Having curiosity and sound values, the experienced teacher also would like to travel for work overseas, but has a language problem and waits for its resolution from the institution.

The main opportunities for interoperability and synergy of writing, research, teaching and learning that interviewed teachers said are the following:

- Application of research results in teaching and writing books and papers;
- Good communications among colleagues inside the university helps to organise interdisciplinary research and teaching;
- Practical experience of some professors helps to conduct applied research and mentoring early stage teachers.

However, the main challenges that prevent effective interoperability and synergy are the following:

- Low opportunities to get funding and grants for research and publishing;
- A heavy teaching load and a lot of administrative duties;
- No time for research and professional development.

It seems that with good practical experience and intra-university ties, teachers of the UBL could potentially successfully combine teaching, research, writing and professional development. However, the teaching hours overloading and administrative pressure do not allow them to achieve a synergy between these four areas.

OPPORTUNITIES

The UBL model gives to teachers certain opportunities, e.g.:
- an opportunity for mobility abroad for teaching or attending foreign training schools thanks to the Erasmus + and other foreign or local government programmes on a competitive basis;
- an opportunity to participate in the research project team inside the faculty;
- an opportunity to communicate with colleagues inside the university who help to organise interdisciplinary research and teaching;
- various teaching and learning programmes, workshops, disciplinary related and cross disciplinary research support, leadership training, and support of engaging in EU/international projects;
- continuing professional development opportunities in the university, funding by university;
- financial support for some kinds of research publication for senior teachers.

These opportunities develop certain skills and allow teachers to find others to participate in joint projects. However, there is no special centre or continuous programme devoted to supporting writing, research, learning and teaching in the UBL and according to perception from interviewed teachers current efforts are falling somewhat short of the desired output.

CHALLENGES

The main challenges associated with the existing model of support are the following:

- relatively low budget of the university and as a result few opportunities to get funding and grants for research and publishing for teachers';

- a heavy teaching load that leaves almost no time for teacher's self-development, research and writing;

- a lot of administrative duties and bureaucracy, which take a lot of time and effort for the teacher.

Taking these factors together there is an impact on research productivity.

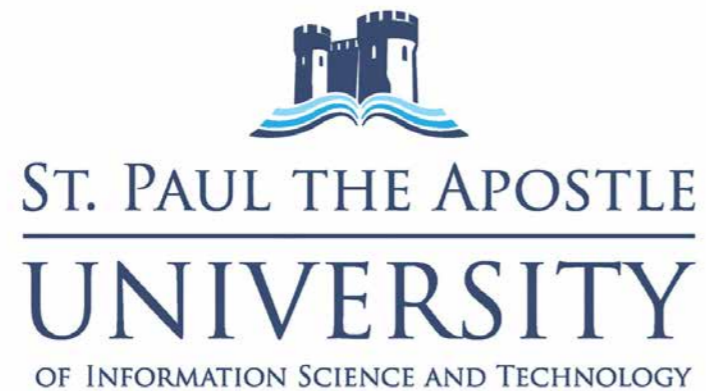## PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIONS, INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The interviews show that the promising early stage and experienced teachers often have a desire to leave the UBL to work overseas. Hence, they look for opportunities to improve their English and support from international organisations. Where the institutions cannot provide the necessary support, the most talented teachers rely only on themselves and their networks/connection within and towards international projects. The low financial capacity of the university, which is forced to restrict spending, may be a reason for increasing a teaching load and administrative pressure on the teachers. From an economic and management point of view, this could be justified to increase cost efficiency. But a university is not just a business, where the economic criteria are more important than others. Here it is more important to preserve and realise the internal potential of academic staff, and give them enough time and resources for self-development, performing teaching and research work, as well as writing and publishing the results of this work. Regretfully there appears to be little change on the horizon at present.

According to the results of this case study the insights and recommendations can be the following. Teaching is a creative profession that needs a certain academic freedom. The lessening of administrative pressure on teachers could not only increase the effectiveness of teacher's work, but also reduce university expenses for an administrative apparatus. The released money could be spent on new research projects and competitive support for young teachers. The UBL teachers would feel the university's concern for them, moral and financial support, and would choose to stay in their institutions and to contribute to its success.

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CASE STUDY OF UIST'S MODELS OF CENTRALISED SUPPORT FOR TEACHING, LEARNING, RESEARCH AND WRITING

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this case study is to describe the available centralised models of support for writing, research, learning and teaching development at the University of Information Science and Technology (UIST) "St. Paul the Apostle" (UIST) in Ohrid, Republic of North Macedonia and to provide some recommendations regarding the improvement of centralised support for writing, research, learning and teaching at UIST. The case study is informed by the author's observations and informal interviews with Macedonian teaching staff as well as administrative staff at UIST. A total number of 30 Macedonian staff were interviewed. The rationale behind interviewing only Macedonian staff of UIST is justified by the fact that Macedonian staff are more familiar with legislation and provisions related to higher education in Macedonia; therefore, they would be in a better position to provide useful insights. The case study has also taken into account relevant current legislation regarding higher education in the Republic of North Macedonia and relevant provisions at UIST regarding support of writing, research, learning and teaching. UIST is a public state university formed in 2008 by the parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia. As a public state university, UIST is in compliance with the government's legislations of higher education and is directly affected by the available resources allocated from the state budget to higher education institutions. Budgetary concerns have a huge impact on the availability of resources and the quality of research. As a relatively new university, UIST has faced and is still facing many challenges. These obstacles have affected the overall teaching and research process. However, certain steps have been taken by the university's management as well as academic staff to improve, and benefit from, available resources. This case study will critically analyse the current available models of support across the four areas and will point out the strengths and weaknesses associated with the existing model.

BACKGROUND TO THE CASE STUDY

The University of Information Science and Technology (UIST) "St. Paul the Apostle" is a higher education state institution based in Ohrid, Republic of North Macedonia. UIST was established by a law passed by the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia in 2008 (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonian No. 81 on 07.07.2008 and all subsequent amendments No. 48 on 13.04.2009 and No. 6 on 15.01.2010).

Initially, it was decided to establish the university in Skopje, the capital of Macedonia. In the following amendments to the law on establishing the university No. 48 on 13.04.2009, the city of Ohrid was designated as the location of the university. Following the public debates at the time, the reasons for moving the university from Skopje to Ohrid were many but the most frequently cited ones were:

- Skopje has the biggest and the oldest higher education institution in Macedonia with many other private higher education institutions.

- Other bigger cities in North Macedonia, like Bitola and Stip have both state and private higher education institutions.

- Ohrid, culturally and historically, is considered the birthplace of Slavic literary tradition through the works of Saints Cyril and Methodius and Saints Clement and Naum. Therefore, building upon this historical heritage is a solid foundation for establishing new modern institutions that benefit from the values and traditions of the past and continue the path of the saints in a new modern era. The significance of the city of Ohrid to Slavic literary tradition has been studied by many researchers.

UIST was established recognizing the need for a specialized higher education institution in computer science and technology that would serve this part of Macedonia but would also attract regional and international students. Lawmakers at the time understood the need for establishing a higher education institution in this part of the country that would incorporate the new trends of internationalization and digitalization of higher education. For that reason, the language of instruction at UIST is English. All courses are delivered in English, and English is the official language of the university. This at the time was quite innovative as UIST was the first state university in Macedonia to adopt English as the medium of instruction. The rationale for English as the medium of instruction follows what numerous studies on adopting English as a medium of instruction and internationalization of higher education and globalization processes have shown. For example, Wilkinson (2012, p.3) numbers several factors that support English as a medium of instruction at higher education institutions where English is not the native language of the community, such as economic, social and political reasons as well as university rankings, visibility of academic publications, and attraction of foreign students. Another step towards internationalization taken by the management of the university was to provide teaching staff from abroad. These were professors from the USA on Fulbright or other exchange programs, as well as professors from India, Iran, Italy, Ukraine, China, and Belarus among others. In addition, and towards greater internationalization of higher education, UIST has had many international students from different parts of the world. Many of these students come from African countries such as Cameroon, Tanzania, Congo, but also from other countries such as Turkey, Georgia, China, Vietnam, Mogolia; a relatively small number of students come from European countries such as Croatia. All international students receive a scholarship towards their education fees and other costs related to their accommodation and studies which are regulated by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science.

Having English as the medium of instruction, international teaching staff working alongside local staff, and international students on campus contributed to establishing UIST as a unique environment in higher education offerings in Macedonia. The international fabric and outreach of the university resulted in UIST having a multicultural environment unique for state universities in Macedonia, which is reflected in the student population and teaching staff from a wide variety of countries, along with domestic students.

UIST is an integrated university with five faculties specializing in computer science and engineering. By integrated university we understand that all different faculties function within the same physical location as opposed to other universities that have different faculties dispersed in one city or even in different cities in one country. The faculties within UIST are:

- ISVMA Faculty of Information Systems, Visualization, Multimedia and Animation.
- CSE Faculty of Computer Science and Engineering
- CNS Faculty of Communication Networks and Security
- ICS Faculty of Information and Communication Science
- AITMIR Faculty of Applied IT, Machine Intelligence and Robots.

All faculties provide bachelor and master's degrees in the field of computer science and engineering. UIST can be considered a relatively new and small university: new since it has commenced work ten years ago; small because the total number of students studying at different programs is about 400 students. The relatively small size and newness of the university leads to both advantages and disadvantages reflected in the overall functioning of the university. Challenges particularly related to centralised support of writing, research, learning and teaching will be addressed in the coming section.

OVERVIEW OF THE CENTRALISED SUPPORT OF WRITING, RESEARCH, LEARNING AND TEACHING AT UIST

The University of Information Science and Technology "St. Paul the Apostle"- Ohrid (UIST) is a state university established by the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia in 2008. The educational process as well as the overall activities of the university are regulated by the law on higher education and the statute of the university in addition to internal acts and guidelines of the university. Being a state university financed through public funds means that it mostly depends on funds and resources allocated by the state i.e. the Ministry of Education and Science. These funds cover all expenses of the university including funds for writing, research, learning and teaching.

Centralised support of research is influenced by the available funds for research and the universities activities towards providing opportunities for research. Funds that the university receives for research are from the centralized budget (the budget allocated by the Ministry of Education and Science) and the allocated funds by the university through different financing venues: self-financing and financing through participation in projects (national, regional and international).

Unfortunately, funds for higher education have been subject to continual reduction in the past ten years in the country. Jovanovic (2019, p. 2) observed a trend of reduction of funds allocated for education in general and higher education and research in particular from the central budget. In 2010, the allocated budget for higher education from the central budget of the state was 1.1% of GDP whereas in 2018 it was 0.8% of GDP. Likewise, resources allocated for scientific research by the central state budget in 2020 have been also decreased compared to 2019.

The total budget that UIST received from the Ministry of Education and Science in 2020 has also been smaller compared to 2019. As a consequence, the amount of funds available to the university either from the Ministry of Education and Science or from self-financing resources are small compared to other European universities. The amount of funds available for support of research from both venues are even smaller.

The visual below compares and summarizes the central education and science budget in 2019 versus 2020.
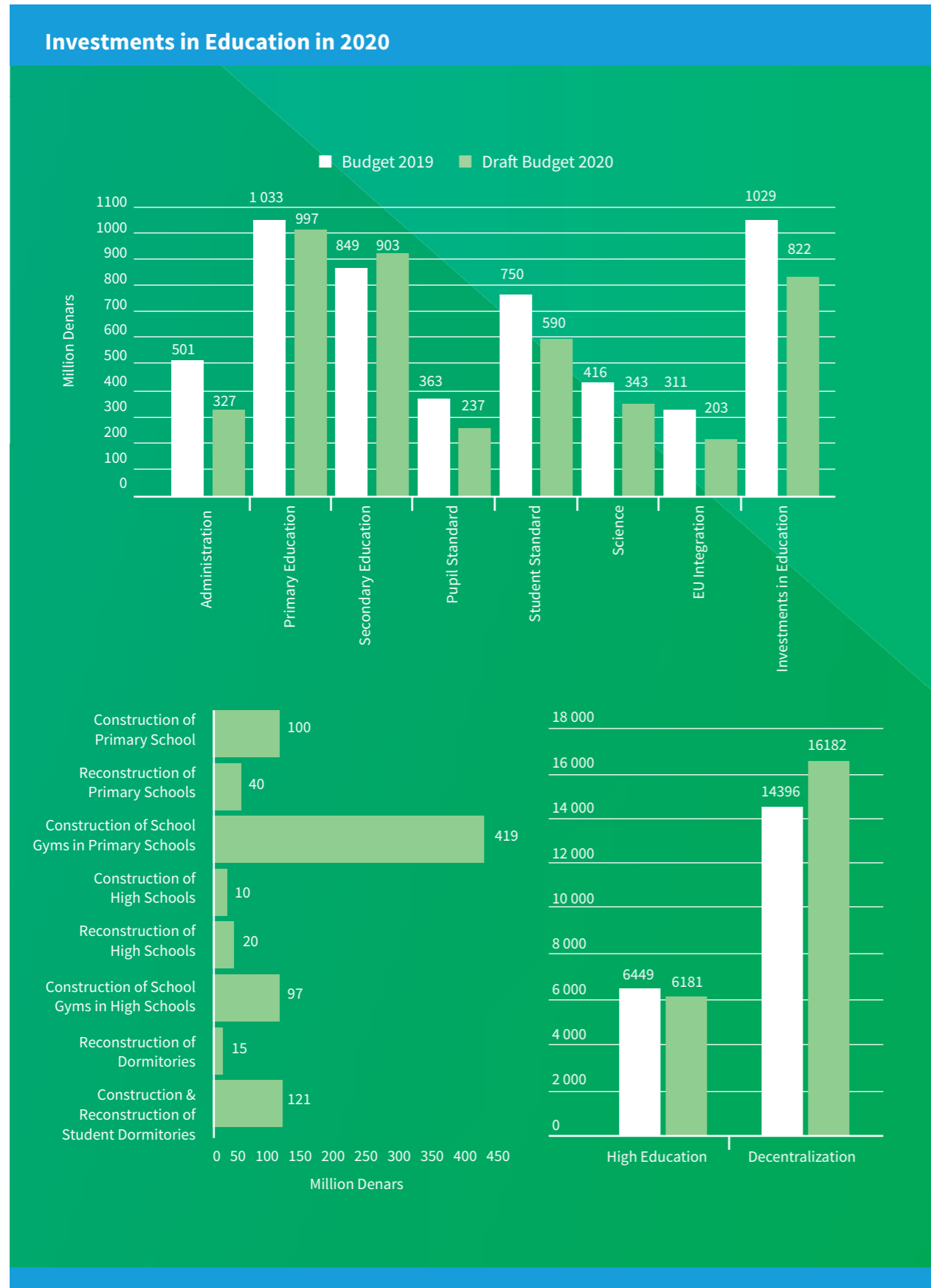
Figure 1: Education and science budget in 2019 and 2020
Source: https://studenti.mk/kakov-e-predlog-budzetot-za-obrazovanie-vo-2020/

As the numbers in Figure 1 show, in the 2020 budget, an increase of funds is allocated for salaries, decentralisation activities, primary education, and secondary education. However, in spite of the larger education budget in 2020, higher education and scientific research are allocated less funds in 2020 than the previous year. Because of these cuts, some analysts criticized the government for not investing enough in scientific research. According to the findings obtained through the study "Financial transparency and accountability in higher education and science in the Republic of North Macedonia" the funds allocated from the education budget are among the lowest in Europe, accounting for about 3.7% of GDP. This affects the quality of education, but also the overall social development.

Quality research requires financial investment and support. The small amount of research funds available at UIST poses a great challenge to all academic staff at the university. Teaching staff are required by the law of higher education in Macedonia and the statute of UIST to fulfil a multitude of requirements to be able to continue their career development and be elected into higher academic titles. Shortage of funding for research has been an ongoing challenge and difficulty faced by all teaching/academic staff in universities all over the country and it is not unique for UIST staff. Nevertheless, the difficulties faced by UIST staff are even greater given the small budget of the university and the trends of reduction of budgets for higher education by the state.

However, the University has introduced and is pursuing the practice of searching for additional funding sources by participating in various project funding calls. In 2019, the University participated in 14 national, regional and European projects, which had a positive impact on increasing funds, mobility and publication outcomes. In the period from January 2012 to September 2018, a total of 354 peer-reviewed papers were presented and published at relevant conferences and professional scientific journals. 135 papers were mentioned by "Web of Science", and 31 books and book chapters were published. Moreover, the staff at UIST are actively involved in networks such as FP7, COST, ICGEB, IEAE, CEEPUS and similar international networks of researchers. Research and publication of scientific papers continued in 2019. Teaching staff of the University published a total of 61 papers and publications in 2019.

In 2018, the university launched its first international conference on applied computer technology. The conference was the outcome of the cooperation between UIST and Technical University of Varna. The conference offered a venue for exchange of scientific insight and had an interdisciplinary character covering fields related to computer science, humanities and digital arts. In turn, the conference provided the opportunity for academic staff at UIST to present their work, network with peers and exchange ideas and practices. In spite of the improvement in research outcomes at UIST, challenges related to the centralized support of research remain. Such concerns are going to be addressed under the heading of 'Challenges' in this case study.

Regarding the teaching process, the university offers a variety of curricula for undergraduate and postgraduate studies in the field of information science and technology. At the first study cycle, the university offers three-year and four-year undergraduate studies at five different faculties. The centralised support is realised through the decisions brought by the management of the university. The university in terms of the teaching process employs international teaching staff which make up a large proportion of the total teaching staff. The university's management believe this is necessary as one of the founding principles of the university is to increase the international character of the university.

In terms of control and quality assurance, the university introduced a requirement for teaching staff to keep records of their lectures and tutorials so as to minimise the risk of missing or cancelling teaching activities. A teaching commission oversees and plans the organisation and co-ordination of the teaching process in terms of organisation of teaching coverage for each semester, organisation of midterm and final exam sessions. In addition, the teaching commission prepares proposals for accreditation of new study programs of the first and second study cycle delivered using English as the medium of instruction at the university which are submitted to the Board of Accreditation for approval. The commission also initiates a process of re-accreditation of currently accredited programs in order to bring them into line with new legislations and to modernize the study programs.

Likewise, the management of the university as well as individual teaching staff organise lectures, presentations, workshops and keynote speeches by invited guest speakers with the aim of bringing the industry and academic environments closer together and transferring practical experience to both staff and students. Moreover, and in order to encourage collaboration and sharing among academic staff, the management organises weekly meetings of teaching and associate staff in order to share with each other their research interests and current work.

In relation to learning and writing, there are no clearly defined models of centralised support of these two areas nor are there special resources as such for support of these activities. Writing and learning are not supported in a centrally organised way at UIST.

Learning and writing are part of the overall teaching process and teaching responsibilities of the teaching staff. Learning of students and their progress is essentially the individual responsibility of the teaching staff. One of the instruments that measures quality of teaching and the successfulness of the teaching staff in knowledge transfer to students is the self-evaluation survey that each member of the teaching staff is required to administer to students at the end or sometimes in the middle of the semester in order to get their feedback and suggestions regarding their learning experience on a specific course. The data of such surveys are analysed by designated members of the university that take into account strengths and weaknesses pointed out by students and look at ways to improve and overcome emerging difficulties.

Writing is part of course assignment requirements of many courses. Technical Communication is a mandatory course/subject for all students in their first year of study. This course introduces the essential concepts and basic skills of technical writing to students and familiarises students with different types of workplace documents and skills. Many writing assignments are part of this course. Writing is an inseparable part of teaching staff work and is closely related to research.

To summarise this section in terms of centralised model of support of writing, research, learning and teaching, we might conclude that budgetary concerns at UIST have a significant impact on the overall quality and support across the four areas. There are certain measures of centralised support of research and teaching but such initiatives are not available as centralised models of support for learning and writing.

INTEROPERABILITY AND SYNERGIES ACROSS THE SUPPORTS

At the University of Information Science and Technology "St. Paul the Apostle"- Ohrid, Macedonia, the available centralised models for support for writing, research, learning and teaching have two evident characteristics. The existing models can be described as top-down combined with individual effort. Top-down models are dependent on the available resources allocated by the Ministry of Education and Science and the approved resources allocated by the university's management to support and improve outcomes across all activities related to the teaching and research process.

Teaching is conducted by professors, teaching assistants and lecturers who are competent in their teaching fields according to the law on higher education in the Republic of Macedonia. The work of the teaching staff is supervised by the dean of the faculty, the teaching council and the vice-rector for teaching of the university. According to this, the teaching process is centralised and regulated by the law on higher education, the statue of the faculty (university) and other relevant internal provisions of the particular institution.

Learning is evaluated by teaching staff through the fulfilment of course requirements (assignments, projects, and exams). There is no separate centre that provides support and advice to students in relation to their learning as for example an academic counsel/advisor that supervises learning.

Research is conducted individually by teaching staff in their respective fields. The centralised support is provided through the budget of the Republic of North Macedonia via the Ministry of Education and Science

in the form of funds for research and publishing. However, since the budget is usually tight, as pointed to above, few individuals at the level of the university have managed to take advantage of these resources. Apart from the central budget of the ministry available to all Macedonian academics, the University of Information Science and Technology provides some support for research to its academic staff which is again dependent on availability of resources and revision and approval by the management.

Writing i.e. publishing is a requirement for teaching staff as part of the fulfilment of the legal requirement for teaching positions. Again, this type of writing is done individually and there is no centralized support apart from the funds mentioned above from the Ministry of Education and Science and the budget of the university. Essentially this is the individual effort and success of teaching and academic staff if they manage to get funds for their research projects. Students' writing is evaluated by teaching staff when it is part of their course assignments or a requirement for earning a degree. There is no specialized writing centre at the university that delivers writing courses or works on improving writing skills of students.

OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunities associated with the existing model of support are directly related to the availability of funds for research projects either from the central budget, provided by the Ministry of Education and Science, or from the self-financing resources at the disposal of the university. Teaching staff at UIST may apply for conference grants provided by the university. Such applications for conference grants are reviewed and approved by the management. The candidate asking for conference grant submits a request to the management with relevant details about the conference (location, type, dates) and the accepted paper by the particular conference. If the management decides that the paper is of good quality then the applicant might receive a grant contributing to the overall expenses of the conference (registration fees, accommodation and transport). This opportunity is welcomed by academic staff at UIST; however, on the other hand, the decision making associated with it is sometimes opaque.

If papers get published, then candidates might apply for funds provided by the Ministry of Education and Science based on criteria published on the ministry's website. This is another opportunity available to all Macedonian researchers provided by the Ministry of Education and Science. However, the process of selection and approval can be slow and ill-defined.

The university has established collaboration with many European and international higher education institutions. The purpose of such collaboration is to provide opportunities to students, administrative staff and academic staff to participate in different exchange programs. Researches at UIST benefit from this opportunity by participating in European funded projects and mobility opportunities. These opportunities are under different types of models such as the Erasmus mobility of teaching staff, COST, Horizon 2020 and CEEPUS among others. However, not all these programs can fall under the type of centralized model of support as discussed here; although the university formally signs agreements in certain types of programs (e.g. Erasmus, CEEPUS) and initiates collaboration with certain institutions, in others the selection is made based on the qualification of the individual applicant (researcher, student) with little to no involvement of the university. Nevertheless, international collaboration and mobility, whether supported and realized through the university or as the fruit of an individual effort, represent a very valuable opportunity for career development, knowledge sharing, and networking of UIST staff. Teaching staff at UIST have participated and continue to participate in many of the above-mentioned mobility and career development opportunities.

CHALLENGES

This section is informed by informal interviews with teaching staff at UIST regarding their views of the centralised support model of writing, research, learning and teaching. The teaching staff interviewed are a total of 30 full-time professors, assistant professors, research-associates, lecturers and teaching assistants. The interviews aimed at capturing teaching staff perspectives regarding the challenges, opportunities, strength and weaknesses of the existing model of support for writing, research, learning and teaching at UIST.

In relation to challenges faced by teaching staff across writing, research, learning and teaching the great majority of teaching staff pinpointed research as the area where they face the biggest challenges. The issue of lack of funding resources has been mentioned and discussed in the sections above. Teaching staff at UIST raised their concern regarding the allocation of the available budget to research purposes.

Another issue that teaching staff raised is the lack of certainty around conference grants, Erasmus mobility and in-house scientific projects financed by the university, which does not contribute to an overall productive, healthy, collaborative atmosphere at the university.

The majority of teaching staff and researchers at UIST agree that opportunities available to them are few compared to other colleagues in other Macedonian universities and European universities. They state also that such opportunities are the outcome of their individual work, networking, and enthusiasm rather than the fruit of a centralised support model. Where this is the case, it may not contribute to knowledge sharing among colleagues, greater cooperation and synergy but rather to opportunistic, individualistic, isolated work.

In relation to teaching and learning, UIST teaching staff agree that these processes are the individual responsibility of the course professor. Teaching staff have full responsibility when it comes to quality of teaching, selection of teaching materials, quality of teaching materials, evaluation, testing, and mentoring of learners. Of course, this is done in compliance with the accredited study programs and course syllabus. On the one hand this academic freedom is welcomed by academic staff yet on the other, they acknowledge the need for better quality control mechanisms.

Writing at UIST is realised as part of course specific assignments, diploma or Master's degree requirements or as publishing activities by teaching staff. Certain writing courses are a core part of study programs at UIST such as Technical Communication and Academic Writing. However, apart from these specialised writing courses, no writing center or extra-curricular writing activities are available.

PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIONS, INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The teaching staff at UIST through informal interviews provided their perspectives regarding the challenges and opportunities available to them as centralised support models of research, learning, writing and teaching. They stated that the current model of centralised support provides some support for research/writing whereas there is a dearth of support offered for learning and teaching in a centralized manner.

Regarding support for research, academic staff at UIST pointed out the lack of clarity in terms of allocation of research funds. Were this issue addressed, they believe this would lead to increased trust among colleagues and better outcomes in terms of the overall research activities at the university. Moreover, academic staff pointed out the necessity for reliable criteria upon which candidates are selected for conference grants, mobility opportunities, and internally funded projects. Establishment of clear, fair and transparent criteria leads to equal opportunities for all academic staff and will result in greater motivation and an overall better quality of research activities.

Academic staff wish to nurture a culture of cooperation and sharing of knowledge and opportunities among themselves. Such an atmosphere might provide support not only for research and writing but also learning and teaching. More experienced colleagues would provide help and insight to early career staff in the process of selection, preparation and submission of project applications, proposal writing, and mobility grants. A collegiate culture should be supported and encouraged by the management through mechanisms that ensure merit-based acknowledgment and recognition of individual and group projects. A designated staff member could select and gather information regarding career development opportunities, relevant conferences and workshops, call for papers and projects and publicize and share such information with colleagues on a regular basis.

Regular meetings among teaching staff could be organised where academic staff can share their research interest, current work and experience with each other and discuss possible cooperation on relevant research projects. In addition, academic staff believe that more experienced teaching staff should take a greater part in helping and mentoring early career and junior staff in their teaching and writing activities.

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ADVANCING EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONAL MODELS TOWARDS COHESIVE TEACHING, LEARNING, RESEARCH AND WRITING DEVELOPMENT – A CASE STUDY – AUSTRIA

INTRODUCTION

Today, universities are important institutions in the context of creating a knowledge-based society. Higher education essentially depends on the quality of teaching. Graduates represent a crucial channel of knowledge transfer from the higher education institution to society. Good teaching must meet international standards in the global competition between locations, and furthermore is of relevance for academic staff's careers (including consideration of work-related periods spent abroad), alongside evaluation of their research work.

The quality of higher education and research is one of the most important resources in the field of technology today and indeed in a range of human activity. Studying the individual cases in different countries can be hugely beneficial when trying to find an effective model towards cohesive writing, research, learning and teaching (WRLT) development.

Establishing synergies among WRLT and defining how these four areas could complement each other towards greater success and productivity of staff and students, as well as capacity building for institutions, is crucial for all stakeholders in the higher educational sector.

In this case study we identify factors that contribute to success, productivity and quality in writing, research, learning and teaching in the Austrian higher education system.

BACKGROUND OF THE CASE STUDY

According to Kováčováa and Vackováa (2015), the success of practical implementation of ideas of effectiveness of education depends on certain factors: special methodical training of teachers; co-operation of teachers and students; provision of the necessary learning material; moral and psychological conditions of teachers and students. The teacher him/herself is a key player in terms of the effectiveness of education and should:

-    study new trends in the field of his/her own subject
-    pay attention to the quality of the preparation of content and the organisation of education
-    increase his/her own professional qualification and ensure his/her personal development
-    increase his didactic and pedagogical profile of competencies
-    actively participate in conferences, seminars and international workshops
-    follow professional and pedagogical publications
-    communicate with students, and
-    cooperate with institutions and organisations in the field actively.

The competence of the educational staff is a crucial factor for student success including the level of knowledge and capabilities of students. Developing excellent subject-based knowledge is undoubtedly important for an innovative society, but it is not enough on its own. In addition to raising academic achievement across all levels of education, innovation policies need to pay attention to the skills young people acquire (Education Innovation and Research OECD 2016) and to what the labor market requires.
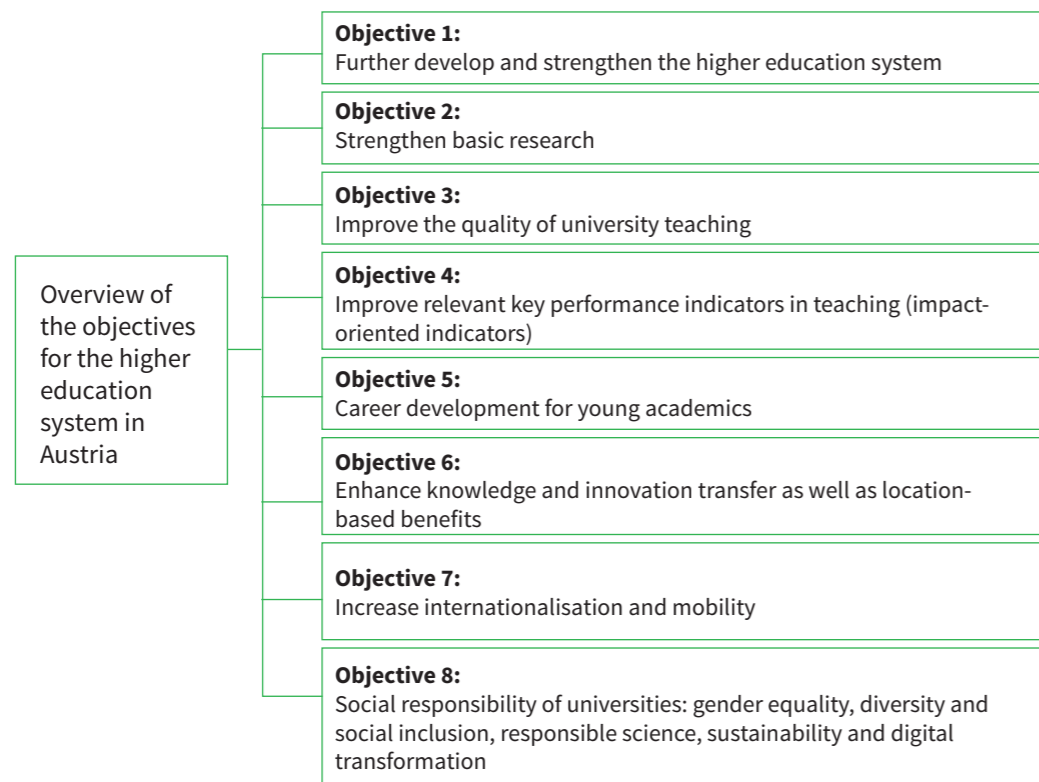
PROFILE OF THE INSTITUTIONS

This case study is based on a Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) within the COST Action 15221 at different Austrian Universities (Karl Landsteiner University Krems (KL), TU Wien, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU), University of Vienna) and draws on several interviews with scientific staff from different universities in Austria.

The higher education area in Austria is complex and diverse. There are 22 public universities (*öffentliche Universitäten*), 21 Universities of Applied Sciences *(Fachhochschulen),* 13 private universities *(Privatuniversitäten)* and 14 university colleges of teacher education *(Pädagogische Hochschulen)*. Austrian universities can be divided into "full-scale" universities (with a full range of faculties) and "specialised" universities such as technical, medical or arts universities.

The programmes offered at Universities mainly focus on scientific education in the respectively field. Some exceptions, like the University of Veterinary Medicine or the Karl Landsteiner Private University of Health Sciences, offer degrees which are practice-oriented and prepare students for their working life. The programmes offered at the Universities of Applied Sciences offer a broad range of educational programmes. Reasons for establishing Universities of Applied Sciences are: a) to ensure practice-oriented training at university level; b) to communicate the skills needed for the respective occupational field in line with the state of the art and practical requirements; c) to promote the permeability of the educational system and the flexibility of graduates regarding various occupations. In contrast, colleges of teacher education only offer teacher training for different level of education.

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research uses the Plan: Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities 2019-2024 (Bundesministerium, (2018) Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, Vienna) as a strategic planning tool for developing higher education and training, for setting priorities and for transparent presentation of its objectives.

Overview of the objectives for the higher education system in Austria

Objective 1:
Further develop and strengthen the higher education system

Objective 2:
Strengthen basic research

Objective 3:
Improve the quality of university teaching

Objective 4:
Improve relevant key performance indicators in teaching (impact-oriented indicators)

Objective 5:
Career development for young academics

Objective 6:
Enhance knowledge and innovation transfer as well as location-based benefits

Objective 7:
Increase internationalisation and mobility

Objective 8:
Social responsibility of universities: gender equality, diversity and social inclusion, responsible science, sustainability and digital transformation

Fig. 1: Overview of the objectives for the higher education system in Austria, diagram made according to Austrian National Development Plan for public Universities 2019-2024, Bundesministerium 2018.

In order to analyse the quality of the higher education area, it is necessary to identify higher education indicators for the key elements (education, research, writing). Education indicators can include teacher indicators (number of full-time professors, number of scientific staff, fluctuation of scientific staff, teacher per student ratio, etc.) and learner indicators (number of regular students, number of graduates, number of student assistants, average duration of studies, finalized PhDs and master theses, etc.)

Indicators which could be analysed to evaluate research quality are: students and staff mobility (research agreements), national and international projects (the amount in euro, the number of students and staff included in those projects), and writing indicators: publications (refereed, proceedings), number of publications with co-authors from the industry, publication resulting from national and international projects, etc.
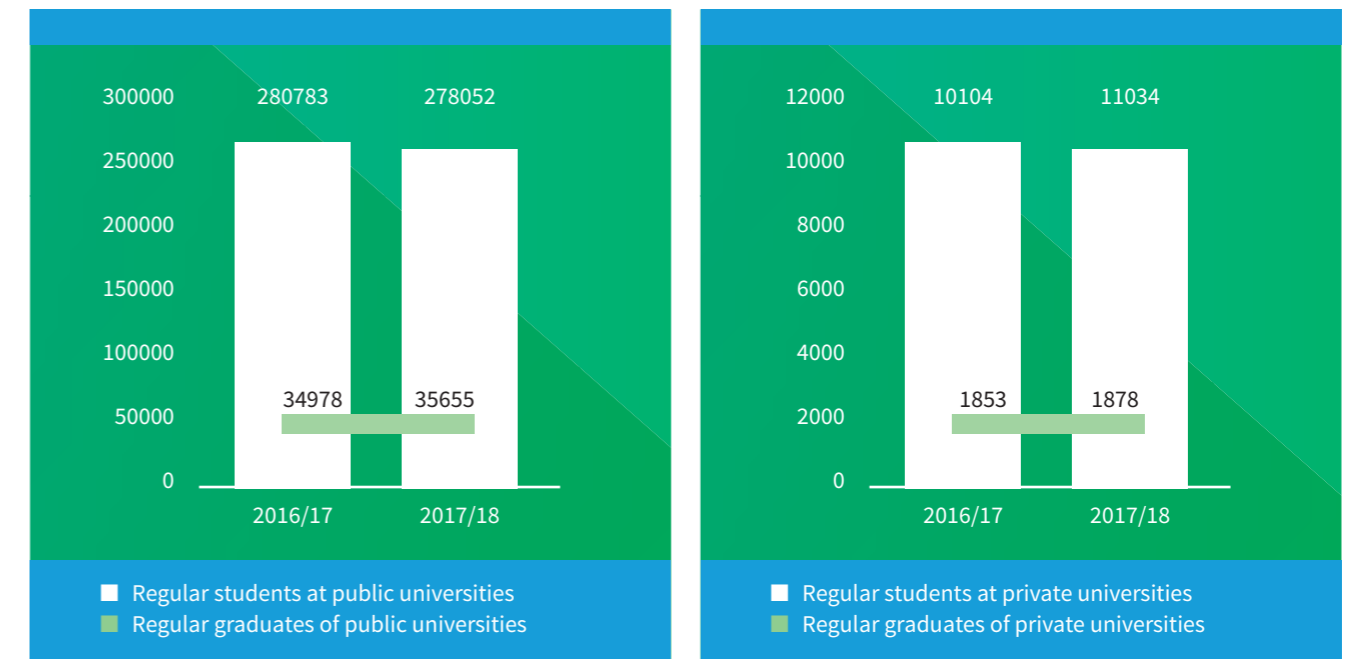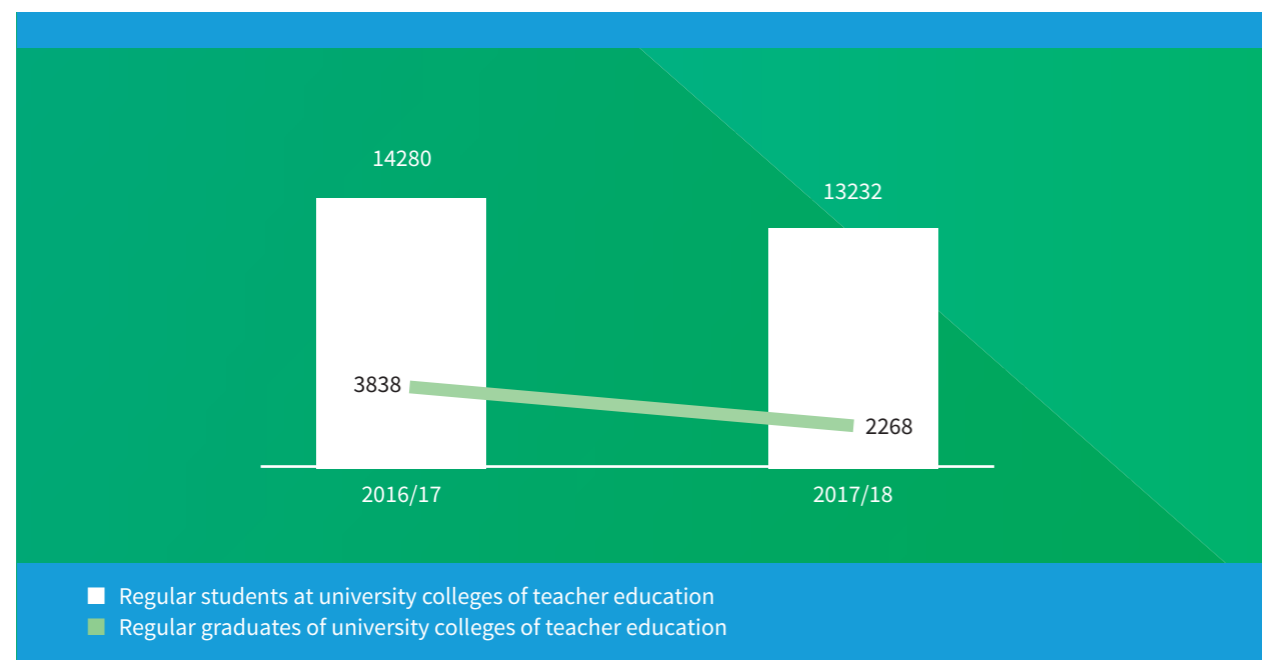

Fig. 2: Number of students and graduates in public and private Austrian universities during the academic years 2016/17, 2017/18.
source: www.statistik.at/web_en/statistics/education/universities

Analysing the academic year 2017/18, the number of students at public university has decreased by 1%, and the number of graduates has increased by almost 2% compared to the previous academic year. At private universities, the number of students has increased by 9.2%, whereas the number of graduates has increased by only 1.3% comparing the academic years 2016/17 and 2017/18.

Austria's higher education remains highly attractive internationally, with 15.1% of its graduates coming from abroad in 2017. Most international students come from other EU countries (75.8%). This is the fourth highest share in the EU, behind the United Kingdom, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, and equal to Denmark (Education and Training, Monitor – Austria, European Commission, 2019).

Comparing the number of teachers and students (teacher/student ratio) is an indicator for the quality of the conditions for studying and/or teaching. This ratio is the component of impact-oriented budgeting and can be used also for planning following the model of capacity-oriented and student-related university funding.

Fig. 3: The number of students and graduates at university colleges of teacher education in Austria comparing the academic years 2016/17 and 2017/18.
source: www.statistik.at/web_en/statistics/education/universities

The Teacher Education system is of special importance for the future student outcomes. A growing emphasis has been put on the quality and performance of education and training systems. It has been increasingly recognised that the quality of teacher education is a crucial factor for the success of education systems, as the quality of teaching teachers is a limiting factor for the quality of the education provided to the students. Also, the important role of the selection of teachers and the recruitment systems for teachers has been acknowledged.

Overview of the centralised supports

The work of a higher education teacher includes scientific research activity, the communication of knowledge and learned scientific truths, teaching, learning, and guiding the students through the knowledge, skills and experience necessary for their professional engagement, for continuous improvement and for a fulfilling life. Therefore, a teacher at a higher education institution must possess the competencies of a lecturer, teacher, educator, mentor, writer, scientist and researcher at the same time. Measures to improve teaching (pedagogy) and the organisation of courses include: student-centered teaching; assessments/evaluations ensuring that the staff are qualified teachers; providing ongoing professional development as well as education and training for university staff.

The new teacher training programme (*Pädagog/innenbildung NEU*, Austrian National Development Plan, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research) has a focus on quality, and in particular on higher education aspects which comprises:
- multi-pillar model that integrates scientific disciplines and arts, teaching methodology, educational principles and practical teacher training courses
- creating co-operative working units for research and development in the scientific disciplines, teaching methodologies and educational sciences as well as a greater focus on professional development
- supporting young academics' careers through qualification programmes (particularly for teaching methodology)
- skills and existing resources through partnerships between universities and university colleges of teacher education

- promoting and funding projects aimed at developing holistic educational concepts in general education and increasing international partnerships and mobility in teacher training.

Teaching should be a highly qualified profession and new teachers should have the opportunity to gain additional competencies. "PädagogInnenbildung NEU" created by Austrian National Development Plan presents an excellent example of pedagogic strategies, which could be implemented in other fields of science.

The new teacher education programmes focus on competency areas and include instructions in subject-related theory, pedagogy and the basics of general education. The aim of the new teacher education system represents the raising of the quality of initial teacher education in Austria in general. Collaboration between university colleges of teacher education and universities has the potential of bringing together the strengths of both types of institutions, and to strengthen training in subject-related theory on the one hand, and pedagogical training on the other, for all new teachers across the education system. A common initial teacher education for all teachers should help them to feel as part of the community and to focus on the common goal of raising achievement for all students in the education system.

Teaching is the basic mission of higher education institutions, and together with research, presents the integral aspect of a university's role in society. A modern high-tech research infrastructure provides the basis for excellent and competitive research. Over the past decade, total expenditure on research and development (R&D) in Austria has risen by about 65 %. In its global estimate, Statistics Austria expected expenditure in this area to reach €12.8 billion in 2019. Nationally, R&D expenditure of 3.19 % of the gross domestic product (GDP).

INTEROPERABILITY AND SYNERGIES

Successful performance in WRLT involves alignment and synergies across all WRLT elements. For example, the quality of the course content (course writing, readings, developed resources, distance learning/web-based learning resources, class exercises, clinical practice and experiments connected with some projects) has an impact on all key elements.

Using mentoring as an example, we can see how development approaches could benefit from alignment and could capitalise on synergies. Effectiveness in mentoring students should have a base in "excellence" of all WRLT (writing, research, learning and teaching) segments. Mentoring is not just encouraging students and helping them to understand the factors that contribute to academic success. Mentoring during research and original creative work should include also WRLT elements for supervision of students research projects, theses, and dissertations and for postgraduates supporting them in their scientific publication and writing, contracts and research grants, conference presentation (oral or poster), book chapters or books.

Successful performance in research and original creative work depends on a series of strategic decisions about what to research or create (research question), how to conduct the work, how to obtain funding for the work, and where to disseminate the work. This increases synergies by establishing or using regional co-ordination structures between higher education institutions, which further develop the higher education mobility strategy.

The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research in Austria established "The Good Teaching Atlas" with numerous examples of quality in higher education teaching. During the period of its preparation, many excellent initiatives have been implemented with the main aim - to highlight the value of teaching and to raise awareness of good practice examples, which are grouped in 15 categories (e.g. incentives for good teaching, teaching methods, course organisation, support for students, new media, continuing education for teachers).

OPPORTUNITIES

Excellent teaching should meet international standards in the global competition and be aligned with academic career trajectories including research work. The teaching also must meet the needs of heterogeneous and/or diverse groups of students, and address social challenges beyond the professional context, as these are also indicators of quality.

The "Third Mission" and the "Responsible Science Initiative" in Austria are based on the comprehensive understanding of the social responsibility of universities, and demonstrate a commitment to teaching, research and innovation that are open to and responsible towards society. The Third Mission in particular includes the transfer of knowledge and technology, innovation, scientific communication, the interaction between universities and industry, and lifelong learning. The teacher policy framework involves (merged in a synergetic fashion) several reforms, namely a teaching standards strategy, an improvement strategy, a professional development strategy, and an incentive strategy. Given the trend towards greater autonomy and flexibility, the more coherently these strands are packaged together the greater the likelihood of success. Most of the necessary policy instruments already exist in Austria or are under development.
The important key factor of the "excellence" at Austrian high education institutions is based on the collaboration patterns among the members in academia from the perspective of the research policy. The assessment is based on research efficiency and effectiveness in project implementation, providing correlation among research performance as well as research collaboration. Research at Higher Education Institutions plays an important role in generating economic and social growth. The Austrian higher education system stimulates universities to raise their research profiles, so that research priorities of universities will be perceived abroad as Austrian research strengths. Identification of research strengths across Austrian higher education institutions and establishing networking platforms present opportunities for improving the international position.

Creating a competitive "innovation fund" for teacher education and development may be a cost-effective way to promote flexibility and creativity, and to improve quality in the higher education sector. Such a fund could help to support and disseminate effective approaches to initial teacher education and in-service education and training.

CHALLENGES

The Austrian model provides extensive information regarding: the national context; the organisation and education of teachers; attracting new teachers; the training, development of teachers; recruitment, selection and allocation of teachers; keeping qualified teachers in institutions; and the views of key stakeholders.

The implications of the highly differentiated system for the development and implementation of teacher policy are (Delannoy et al. 2003):
- personnel that is increasing in average age with relatively few new entrants each year;
- while there is a general surplus of qualified teachers, there are some shortages in specific subject areas including mathematics, physical science, computing, and religion, and in some localities;
- the need for more flexible and differentiated career paths for teachers;
- the need to better align teacher evaluation, reward structures, professional development, and school needs; and
- reform of initial teacher education, and teachers' professional development.

On the matter of organisational structure, the preference is clearly going towards flexible networks of institutions such as the "Alliance of Colleges" envisaged by teacher training institutions in Vienna. Such a configuration is well suited to the modern concept of learning from multiple sources, to the use of technology, self-paced learning, innovative methodologies, and to the federal nature of the country.

Networks linking the Pedagogical Universities as based with associated practice and in-service education delivery points could allow economies of scale, capitalise on staff expertise, and facilitate cross fertilisation. The concept of networks of teacher education institutions characterised by internal complementarity together with external competition could be extended to include the traditional universities themselves. This could lead to the formation of consortia offering a comprehensive range of services – teaching, research, assessment, consulting, mentoring, coaching, technical assistance for projects – to all teachers.

PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIONS, INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The higher education landscape in Austria is characterised by diversity and autonomy as well as needs-oriented, gender-balanced and socially responsible universities with comprehensible and clear responsibility profiles, which permit creativity and scope for individual action.

The strategic activities at the Austrian higher education institutions are focused to achieve excellence in writing, research, learning and teaching and also to establish entrepreneurial and caring roles (in the approach to students and communities), competitive and collegial (in dealing with other stakeholders). National and international impact and global visibility of writing, research, learning and teaching are achieved through internationalisation, strong partnerships and collaboration with non-university research associations.

Other aspects which are also covered are associated with allocating resources, driving research mission differentiation, increasing regional/community engagement, improving research performance, assessing value for money or cost benefit of research, encouraging international cooperation and increasing multidisciplinary research. There are synergies in disciplines with significant research activities at different research institutions.

Adequate national funding for universities provides certainty for planning and allows circumstances for a strategic approach to research together with the competency of researchers.

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APPENDIX 1

Table 1: Teaching staff at universities of applied sciences and private universities. Academic staff and Teaching and Research assistants (total full-time equivalents), Academic staff (full-time equivalents), Teaching and Research assistants (full-time equivalents), Academic staff and Teaching and Research assistants (total headcounts), Academic staff (headcounts), Teaching and Research assistants (headcounts), reporting date 31.12.2018.
source: www.statistik.at/web_en/statistics/PeopleSociety/education/universities

University	Academic staff and Teaching and Research assistants (total full-time equivalents)	Academic staff (full-time equivalents)	Teaching and Research assistants (full-time equivalents)	Academic staff and Teaching and Research assistants (total headcounts)	Academic staff (headcounts)	Teaching and Research assistants (headcounts)
University of Applied Sciences Burgenland	272	243	29	817	789	28
University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria	1106	666	441	2426	1707	719
FHWien University of Applied Sciences of WKW	270	251	19	867	839	28
Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences	276	215	61	727	620	107
University of Applied Sciences Technikum Wien	500	494	6	1153	1146	7
IMC University of Applied Sciences Krems	335	259	76	860	763	97
University of Applied Sciences Wiener Neustadt	517	474	43	1529	1382	147
Carinthia University of Applied Sciences	773	659	114	864	730	134
Joanneum University of Applied Sciences	852	744	109	2384	2057	327
Holztechnikum Kuchl	-	-	-	-	-	-
Salzburg University of Applied Sciences	498	444	55	1237	1155	82
Association University of Applied Sciences Camillo Sitte	-	-	-	-	-	-
St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences	338	289	48	954	872	82
CAMPUS 02 University of Applied Sciences	155	137	19	469	440	29
University of Applied Sciences bfi Vienna	231	212	19	723	701	22
MCI - Management Center Innsbruck	459	267	191	1142	753	389
Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports	68	44	24	125	64	61
University of Applied Sciences Kufstein	171	168	3	463	459	4
University of Applied Sciences Campus Wien	757	707	50	2315	2192	123
Chamber of Labour Salzburg	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lauder Business School	30	30	-	76	76	-
University of Applied Sciences Tyro	210	210	-	689	689	-
FFH Society (Distance Learning)	47	47	-	166	166	-
Upper Austria University of Applied Sciences Health Professions	259	259	1	755	753	2
Private universities						
Catholic Private University Linz	50	42	8	88	76	12
PEF Private University of Management Vienna	-	-	-	-	-	-
UMIT, University for Health Sciences, Medical and computer science engineering Hall / Tyrol	112	107	5	335	322	13
Private Medical University of Salzburg	189	178	11	1654	1638	16
Webster University Vienna	33	31	2	39	37	2
IMADEC University Wien	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anton Bruckner Private University	129	117	12	222	204	18
Private University LI SHI ZHEN	-	-	-	-	-	-
New Design University St. Pölten (NDU)	31	26	5	203	194	9
Music and Arts University of the City of Vienna (formerly "Conservatory")	161	152	9	289	280	9
Sigmund Freud University	150	138	12	1436	1421	15
MODUL University Vienna	44	30	14	89	73	16
Private University Seeburg Castle	26	26	-	87	87	-
Danube Private University	52	37	14	143	99	44
European Peace University Private University	-	-	-	-	-	-
Karl Landsteiner University of Health Sciences	86	51	35	700	642	58
JML Jam Music Lab Private University for Jazz and Popular Music Vienna	18	18	-	55	55	-
Bertha von Suttner Private University	3	3	-	3	3	-

UNIVERSITÉ DE PARIS, FRANCE

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TEACHING, LEARNING, RESEARCHING AND WRITING IN A MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNIVERSITY IN PARIS

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INTRODUCTION

The objective of COST Action 15221 is to offer guidance for the advancement of effective institutional models for cohesive writing, research, learning and teaching development. These objectives involve taking into account both the global and local shared values, skills, and knowledge. It is with this purpose in mind that we offer here a case study of existing support services in the French university Paris Diderot, now part of Université de Paris. The aim of this study is to assess the factors of effectiveness and success but also the challenges faced by the teaching and researching staff of this university, focusing on the situation of junior academics. It is based on public and internal information provided by the university and its various services, discussions with newly recruited lecturers, and relevant academic literature dealing with topics such as language training, academic discourse and writing centres. Additionally, two missions realised by the Ukrainian and the Lithuanian members of the COST group provided very useful contributions to understand the academics' expectations and specific disciplinary values. First, the university itself is described, showing how its history as a Paris university has resulted in broad interdisciplinarity. Then the main characteristics of the existing centralised support services are addressed. This part highlights the emphasis placed on languages, library support and IT services. An assessment of the interoperability and synergies between these units reveals several difficulties. We then deliver an evaluation of the numerous opportunities involved by the university's specificities and the challenges it faces. Finally, we offer several leads to improve support to junior lecturers in their writing, researching, learning and teaching objectives. It is hoped that this study will provide food for thought on the strengths and weaknesses of a university in the French context as regards the career development opportunities offered to its junior teaching and research staff.

BACKGROUND TO THE CASE STUDY

This case study is informed by public and internal information available to students and staff of the Université Paris Diderot, now part of the new Université de Paris. The information quoted comes from the official university website (https://u-paris.fr/) and from specific services' public information or from annual reports. Further information has been obtained through discussions with newly recruited staff and persons in charge of existing support services. In addition, academic literature has been selected when relevant to the various topics discussed here such as academic writing, language training and writing centres.

The COST project has also provided precious information thanks to the two STSMs (Short Term Scientific Missions) undertaken at the invitation of the university by a Lithuanian and a Ukrainian teacher-researcher. Jolanta Sinkuniene, from Lithuania, met several leading researchers in the field of corpus linguistics and specialized languages (LSP). The focus on the practice of acknowledgments in academic writing in various domains has given evidence that it reflects specific academic values and issues at stake. Anatoliy Goncharuk from Ukraine realised a survey based on several interviews and an on-line questionnaire, aimed at assessing the teachers-researchers' motives, opportunities and challenges in their missions of teaching and writing. While the model offered by the university is generally perceived as positive, there seems to be a gap between senior lecturers' concerns about the amount of administrative tasks, and junior researchers' main challenge which is to improve their teaching and academic writing skills, specifically in English.

PROFILE OF THE INSTITUTION

Paris Diderot University (Paris 7) was founded in 1970 and officially disappeared at the end of December 2019 as it merged with Paris Descartes University (Paris 5) to become "Université de Paris", thus going back to its original name. The former "Université de Paris", created in the twelfth century, separated into seven universities in 1970, following the events of May 1968. Each of the six first universities specialized in one or a very few disciplines. Only Paris Diderot became truly an interdisciplinary university covering all the existing disciplines, apart from law and sports education. Paris Diderot was from the very start an innovative institution, promoting new interdisciplinary approaches. One of its specificities was, for instance, to create a department of psychoanalysis studies or specialisations in philosophy of sciences and mathematics education. Until 2008, Paris Diderot was located in the historic centre of Paris, le Quartier Latin (Latin Quarter), in the location of Jussieu, on a closed campus which also housed University Pierre Marie Curie (Paris 6). Following problems caused by asbestos contamination, but also the extension of both universities' activities, Paris Diderot moved to brand new buildings in a new area of Paris, reclaimed from former railyards, close to the National Library François Mitterrand, in the South-Eastern part of Paris. While Jussieu was a closed campus in a very active cultural site, Paris Diderot comprises several disciplinary buildings scattered in a large area, only recently urbanised.

Like all French universities, Paris Diderot University, now Université de Paris comprises three main structures: disciplinary teaching sections called UFR (Unités de Formation et de Recherche or Education and Research Units), Doctoral Schools which prepare PhD students for research careers and Research Laboratories. Shared facilities include a language resource centre, an IT platform and a university library.

In the French system of Higher Education, the status of teaching and research staff varies from former teachers seconded from secondary schools whose job is to teach mostly undergraduate students, to "maîtres de conférences" or "lecturers" and "professeurs des universités" or "full professors". For the two last categories, the workload is supposed to be divided equally between teaching and research with 192 annual teaching hours. Management tasks are mainly assumed by administrative and research staff.

Key figures of the newly created Université de Paris include the following: 62,170 students, 142 research laboratories, 4,500 teachers-researchers, 21 Doctoral Schools, 3,000 administrative and technical staff. It offers courses in the following fields: arts, humanities and languages; human, economic and social sciences; science and technology; medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and nursing.

Health sciences are now very heavily represented, as are geosciences. The university is also promoting a new set of transversal projects, combining natural sciences and the humanities, such as "Universe, Earth and Environment studies: from fundamental processes to crisis management, migration strategies and public policies".

In this case study, we have chosen to focus on the University Paris Diderot, considering that the history of the Université de Paris, which has only been in existence since December 2019, is still too recent for this entity to be studied as a whole.

OVERVIEW OF THE CENTRALISED SUPPORTS

Centralised supports of writing, research, learning and teaching in the University of Paris Diderot (now part of Université de Paris) mainly focus on three main objectives: providing library support for teachers-researchers and students; offering adequate resources to both teachers-researchers and students to master IT and digital skills; delivering adequate training to foreign and specialised languages.

More specifically, the central university library now occupies a brand new building which covers 8000m^2 on five levels, 1,400 seats, and 240,000 documents in open access. The library also organises training sessions for students and teachers-researchers. These sessions include training in bibliographic software such as Zotero, initiation to open-access publishing, information on digital identity and research social networks.

Other structures address the needs for IT and digital training support. The SCRIPT ("Service Commun de l'université dédié aux Ressources Informatiques Pédagogiques et Technologiques": shared support service for IT and educational resources) offers a platform for teachers-researchers and students. Teachers-researchers can use a recording platform and a self-service e-learning lab to create their courses.

The mission of SAPIENS (Service d'Accompagnement aux Pédagogies Innovantes et à l'Enseignement Numérique: Support services for innovative pedagogies and digital learning) is to provide support for innovative initiatives in the fields of teaching and new technologies. One innovative production is the "Learning Scape", an escape game on pedagogy. Teachers can also use the Moodle platform for on-line classes.

In this interdisciplinary university, languages are a crucial issue. The Language Resource Centre includes 10 classrooms with 25 computers in each room. It offers appropriate software support for the students to teach themselves German, English, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, French as a Foreign Language, Italian, Japanese and Vietnamese. PERL (Pôle d'Elaboration de Ressources Linguistiques: platform for the elaboration of linguistic resources) and its team of teachers-researchers create resources for distance learning and teaching of languages, including interactive scenarios and personalized programmes both for teachers-researchers' teaching needs and for students.

INTEROPERABILITY AND SYNERGIES

As can be seen from the description given above, the Université Paris Diderot (now part of Université de Paris) provides numerous services and supports to its staff and students. However, several limitations should be stated. The first one is that, while needs connected with digital learning and teaching, self-instruction in language and e-learning, and use of library resources are addressed, there does not seem to be any central support for young researchers' writing needs. The library does provide training sessions as an initiation to publishing good practices and the open access world, but this instruction should not be confused with support in the field of academic writing, and writing in a discipline. Some doctoral schools offer individual support in this field, mostly in the form of tutoring in science departments, but there is no centralised support. Central services include a specific service for doctoral studies, the DRIVE (Direction de la Recherche, de l'Innovation, de la Valorisation et des Etudes doctorales: Department of Research, Innovation, Valorisation and Doctoral Studies). This department sets its priorities on research, industrial and scientific valorisation and counselling for financial engineering. Again, while indeed very useful for the technical aspects of research, this cannot be considered as a support to writing, learning and teaching.

Innovative structures such as PERL, for languages and e-learning, and SAPIENS for digital teaching practices, provide very interesting material (Burrows and Miras 2019). However, teachers-researchers are not always or even rarely aware of the existence of these innovative and new central structures, which are not promoted within the disciplinary faculties or UFR (Unités de Formation et de Recherche: Research and Teaching Units). Similarly, teachers-researchers are rarely fully aware of the extent of the library's resources and offerings in terms of training. Therefore, there appears to be a lack of information about what is available in terms of teaching and researching resources.

The description given above does not mention any provision of support and personal training for freshly recruited academics either, apart from instruction in the field of digital learning and teaching. The French system does involve a one year tutorship by senior researchers for newly recruited teachers-researchers but it is too often extremely formal given that senior researchers are already overwhelmed by ever increasing administrative tasks.

Another deficiency should be pointed out: the provision of support in French for Academic Purposes (FOU or Français à Objectif Universitaire). In 2018, the University Paris-Diderot alone attracted 12% of the 165,000 international students in France. These students, and more specifically PhD students, have specific needs to master the French oral and written academic discourse. The Department of Applied Languages offers a 220-hours programme on general academic writing (Diplôme Universitaire de Langue et de Civilisation Française) but there is no provision of training in academic writing in various disciplines for international students.

OPPORTUNITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE EXISTING MODEL OF SUPPORT

As an institution, the Université Paris Diderot as part of the Université de Paris offers major assets for the development of support tools for teachers-researchers. Major factors are its size, which implies much bigger resources than in a small university, its location in a major and famous city which contributes to attracting internationally known scholars, modern facilities due to its recent change of location inside Paris, and prestigious international partnerships with other European capitals and with United States universities such as the MIT or Harvard. Another major asset for the dynamics of research and teaching is its very characteristic interdisciplinarity.

As was mentioned in the introduction, interdisciplinarity is part of the DNA of Université Paris Diderot and the recent merging with the University Paris Descartes will only reinforce this characteristic by adding three disciplines: STAPS (Sciences et Techniques des Activités Physiques et Sportives: sciences and techniques of physical and sports activities), legal and management studies, and education studies. Moreover, Paris Descartes' department of psychology offers a different approach to Paris Diderot's department of psychoanalysis studies, as it encompasses social psychology, psychopathology and cognitive psychology.

Paris Diderot also offers three complementary approaches of language studies: the department of linguistics offers high level studies of computational linguistics, a master's degree in didactics of French as a Foreign Language, and phonology studies. The English studies' linguistic research section focuses on English linguistics while the Intercultural and Applied Sciences Department addresses the issues of Languages for Specific Purposes, with a specific interest for English for Academic Purposes. To various extents, the three departments share a corpus linguistics approach, based on the automatic study of general or specialised corpora.

The strong interdisciplinarity of Paris Diderot and now of Université de Paris should greatly benefit from this rich and wide linguistic approach. It is already the case to some extent. Special mention must be made of several on-going interdisciplinary teaching projects with pooled learning: a joint project of the STEP department (Sciences de la Terre, de l'Environnement et des Planètes: Earth, Environment and Planets Sciences) and the Intercultural and Applied Languages Department, which organises bi-disciplinary groups to work on the terminology and specialised translation of volcanology, thus contributing to an open-access database (Pecman and Kübler 2012). Another joint project of the Computer Sciences Department and the Anglophone Studies Department has third year BA students from the two disciplines working together to produce posters and blogs in English about programming. These productions are then presented to the Master's students of "Machine Learning and Data Sciences".

Besides, research in linguistics and more specifically in LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) this university addresses core issues for natural and human sciences such as writing in English for academic purposes and the challenges it represents for non-Anglophone students (Gledhill and Kübler 2016). One such domain is the research on writing abstracts and their role in the publishing world (Bordet 2018) or the issue of the use of Plain Language in medical abstracts. However, so far, this research has not given rise to such joint teaching projects as those described above.

CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE EXISTING MODEL OF SUPPORT

As is often the case, the assets of the university are also the sources of difficulties and obstacles. Thus, the size of the university and the wide variety of the disciplines it encompasses engender a complexity which make dissemination of research and teaching innovation inside the university difficult. For established academics, and even more so for young researchers who have not built up their academic network, academic life tends to take place at department and laboratory level, without much visibility of what happens in other departments.

For this reason, centralised support structures are not always promoted as they should. One typical example is the university library. The Université Paris Diderot alone runs six libraries and the Université de Paris 22 libraries with their specific disciplinary orientations. This diversity makes the library central university catalogue especially important. However, it remains a source of regret that the subtleties and again the complexities of its use are rarely familiar to students and academic staff alike. Only 30% of the new students take part in a visit of the university library (see library report 2018). The annual report for 2018 claims that 207 doctoral students attended the training sessions offered. Although it has not been possible to determine how many PhD students the university has enrolled, the Physics department mentions 181 PhD students, and the Biology department alone 430, which shows that only a minority of these students actually take advantage of this very interesting offer. This is all the more striking since it is the only centralised offer of training on publishing and its requirements, a major issue for all researchers.

As far as teaching is concerned, centralised support structures tend to prioritise teachers' initiation and training to digital skills. This could be based on the assumption that new teachers-researchers are familiar with the basics of pedagogy. However, this familiarity cannot be taken for granted since no training to teaching is included either in programmes aimed at PhD students nor is it organized for newly recruited teachers, contrary to the case of secondary school teachers, at least to a certain extent.

Languages are also a strong focus of interest for the university. Learning how to communicate in English is obviously considered as a priority. Recently, authorities have underlined the necessity of providing scientific classes in English. This raises two kinds of difficulties. While experienced teachers-researchers usually manage the skills required for a conference presentation and for getting a paper accepted, teaching students in a foreign language requires different types of skills, such as being able to comment and maybe even paraphrase conceptual explanations whenever it appears that students have difficulties understanding academic English. Besides, students and teachers need to be aware that academic discourse has its own terminology and phraseology (Swales and Feak 1994). Consequently, mastering general English does not imply mastering academic English. Furthermore, one may consider that students need to be initiated into academic discourse in their own language before any other. Many researchers currently claim that there is a risk of "epistemicide" whenever academics have no opportunity to express themselves in their own language (Bennett 2007).

PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIONS, INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The University Paris Diderot as a single unit and as part of the University of Paris has strong assets for teachers-researchers. Its size, its central location and its cutting-edge research imply these important resources which can be seen from the existence of a modern library and several support structures for innovative teaching practices. Besides, access to a position in this prestigious university tends to be very selective, which implies that a majority of its staff is made up of experienced and high-level researchers. Its interdisciplinarity is also a decisive asset.

However, it appears that it also has serious drawbacks. The existing support structures tend to place the emphasis on innovative practices rather than on basic training in pedagogy and teaching skills. Initiation to academic discourse and support to academic writing is left to individual initiatives and mostly to PhD supervisors. The interdisciplinarity is not used as an incentive to develop an awareness of disciplinary discursive characteristics and their impact on the writer's credibility. Finally, the existing central support services are insufficiently promoted within the departments and laboratories.

These observations pave the way for various proposals. It would be worth considering the opportunity of using the support of research on specialised languages and academic writing to promote an approach to teaching based on an awareness of the characteristics of academic writing in keeping with its objectives and requirements. Special emphasis should be placed on the difference between general academic discourse and disciplinary discourse. Interdisciplinary practices should be a privileged way of highlighting shared and specific characteristics of various disciplines with Master's and PhD students, which implies a co-operation between Doctoral Schools.

Besides, it may be advisable to ensure that all teachers-researchers and all PhD students take advantage of the training provided by the University Library dealing with the developments in the publishing environment, the development of the Open Access world, and the current issues related to intellectual property.

Interdisciplinary writing practices should be encouraged among young researchers, through the creation of a writing centre: writing centres exist in many countries and provide different support services, such as peer tutoring, group workshops. They deal with all the kinds of oral and written productions which characterise the academic world and provide assistance to all levels of language proficiency (Babcock and Thonus 2018). Such a structure could tap into a wide international current of research in this field. It would contribute to a better support of international students and new researchers.

The ambition of our university, as is encouraged by the Ministry of Education is to be a "centre of excellence". This ambition does not only imply recruiting high level students and researchers but also providing them with adequate training so that they can collectively take advantage of the strong assets of the university.

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CENTRALISED SUPPORT FOR WRITING AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT PROVIDED THROUGH THE UNIT FOR ACADEMIC LANGUAGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

ABSTRACT

The Unit for Academic Language at University of Gothenburg in Sweden has been in operation since 2014 and has until now gone through a process of formation, establishment and institutionalisation. At this point (June 2019) it employs 11 full-time Writing and Language Advisors plus an Administrative Officer and a Director. The Unit is centrally located within the university's structure for education, and holds the responsibility for strengthening the entire university in areas of academic language and writing. The University Board of Education, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education approves the Unit's operational plan on a yearly basis. An Advisory Board for the Unit, with representatives from different university Faculties and Schools as well as students and staff representatives, helps formulate and align the Unit's strategic actions with common university goals and visions.

On the basis of interview data and ethnographically informed field-observations collected and analysed through an STSM exchange conducted together with European University of Viadrina (Germany) and University of Limerick (Ireland), this case study presents an overview of the centralised supports for writing and language development provided through the Unit for Academic Language at the University of Gothenburg. The case study considers the aims, processes, expertise, scholarship and values that have helped shape the activities that are provided at this point (2019). Special attention is given to factors that have helped drive the development of the mission of the Unit for Academic Language in the context of needs and expectations on language support for studying and teaching at this university.

CASE STUDY INFORMED BY STSM

This case study is grounded in the STSM titled **The Writing Centre Exchange Project** (2018-2019), initiated by Íde O'Sullivan, Katrin Girgensohn, Ann-Marie Eriksson, and Gina Henry. In this project, three writing centre directors from three different writing centre organisations, in three separate European countries collaborated to investigate what leads to the effectiveness and success of such centralised support for academic writing and language development (Girgensohn et al., forthcoming). Besides University of Gothenburg (Sweden), the collaborating universities are European University of Viadrina (Germany) and University of Limerick (Ireland). While this case study uses an emic perspective, it is to a large extent based on interview data and ethnographically informed field-observations that were collected through the STSM exchanges. The primary data was collected by the visiting colleagues and also presented to and shared with the home institution during each STSM exchange in the format of focus groups (see STSM Scientific Reports from April 2018 by Girgensohn and Henry, as by O'Sullivan). Local data, like mission statements, websites and other documentation have been used to further substantiate and present the Unit for Academic Language (www.ask.gu.se) at University of Gothenburg (www.gu.se) for the purpose of this case study.

Overview of the institution: The Unit for Academic Language at University of Gothenburg in Sweden was founded in 2013 and initial operations began in 2014. By Swedish measures, the University of Gothenburg is a large governmental research institution with 47,500 students, 6,400 staff and 8 different Schools (June 2019, https://www.gu.se/omuniversitetet). University of Gothenburg prides itself on meeting "societal challenges with diverse knowledge" thanks to its combination of "strong research and attractive study programmes that attract scientists and students from all around the world." The university works actively for sustainable development and is environmentally certified. As the Unit for Academic Language is still young, it has until now gone through a process of formation, establishment and institutionalisation.

Background and context: Individual language tuition in Swedish and English for students has been provided since around 2010 at the University of Gothenburg. Through a process within the University Board of Education (see list of complementary links at the end of the report), which is a drafting and advisory body for the Vice-Chancellor, a more organized form of support was suggested and the Unit for Academic Language (ASK) was decided on in 2013. This type of top-down initiative was explored in the Writing Centre Exchange Project (WCEP) as the approach seems quite unique in a European perspective (Girgensohn et al., forthcoming). The Unit was tasked with organizing tuition in a more systematic way as well as with establishing a sustainable form of academic language support for students as well as staff. Initial work to establish the Unit's operations began during 2014 by an appointed director and a reference group functioning as advisors. The Unit was first set up as an umbrella organisation managed by a Director plus an Administrative Officer, while tuition was carried out by short term contract staff without secured positions as well as adjunct personnel staffed between 5% and 50% with what was termed 'language tuition' but with positions in separate language departments.

The unit's first plan of operation was approved by the University Board of Education during the autumn term 2014, and became effective during 2015 (all steering documents are available, in Swedish only, from the University Board of Education website). The operational plan for 2016 marked an important step for the development of the unit operations. Firstly, it paved the way for an administrative directorship requiring an academic with a scholarly record. Secondly, it opened up for recruiting full time staff in the capacity of "language advisors" with non-academic positions.

Other target areas in the operational plan 2016 concerned creating visibility on the university web and initiating work to produce digital resources that could help structure the core activities. The prioritized goals for the 2017 operational plan emphasized the stabilization of core activities and processes, like student and staff tuition, and the harmonization of activities with university goals. It also emphasized finding ways forward for writing development initiatives across the university. Prioritized goals for 2018 emphasized the function of the unit for university key areas such as internationalization and broadening participation. Prioritized goals for 2019 emphasized the internal organization and function of the unit and the pedagogical quality services provided of.

Organisation: Today (June 2019), the Unit is centrally located within the university's structure for education directly under the University Board of Education and holds the responsibility for strengthening the entire university in areas of academic language and writing development. The University Board of Education, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education and consisting of Vice-Deans from each School/Faculty approves the Unit's operational plan on a yearly basis. An Advisory Board for the Unit, with nominated and selected teacher representatives from a few different university Faculties and Schools as well as the University Library plus student representatives help formulate and align the Unit's strategic actions with common university goals and visions. Since 2017 the Director and the Advisory Board has invited two staff members to represent the Unit staff in Advisory Board meetings.

Relation with other university-wide support functions: Organizationally, the Unit for Academic Language is located in parallel with a teaching and learning unit: the unit for Pedagogical Development and Interactive Learning (PIL, see www.pil.gu.se). PIL is responsible for Higher Education Diploma courses and other training in teaching and learning for academic staff including the use of digital resources. The respective Units (Academic Language and PIL) have their own operational plans and as of yet no unified approach to teaching and learning efforts in the area of academic language nor academic writing, but individual co-workers collaborate occasionally. While both organizations are missioned to support education, they are organizationally located alongside education and research, which are both managed and carried out by departments. Language departments are responsible for language education and also research in those areas, which makes them potentially very important partners for the Unit for Academic Language. Teacher training, other pedagogical training and research in those areas is housed within The Faculty of Education (see: www.uf.gu.se) and divided between five different departments. Research on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education has no department of its own but is an area of expertise in several of the departments. Both units (Academic Language and PIL) have staff who go between academic duties (teaching and researching) and support duties. Many staff members with the Unit for Academic Language hold a teacher degree, and choose to attend Educational Sciences seminars etc. as part of their individual competence development plans.

A central unit for study support houses a special study support group assisting students with for example dyslexia (see: https://studentportal.gu.se/handledning-och-stod/funktionsnedsattning). The Unit for Academic Language and this group often communicate around individual cases and informal cooperation is occasionally set up on a needs-basis.

Another informal and occasional, yet important, partnership is taking shape between parts of the University Library and the Unit for Academic Language. What unites the two organizations is support for students' academic writing but also support for staff and especially PhD-candidates and their scientific writing.

The Faculty of Humanities (see: www.hum.gu.se) houses a number of departments including the Department of Swedish and the Department of Languages and Literatures. These departments provide language education and research in several areas relevant to the Unit for Academic Language. Some staff have backgrounds in those departments and can help connect the Unit with the research that is carried out in those departments even though the Unit is not mandated to doing research at this stage.

The Writing Centre Exchange Project explored each centre organizationally in terms of Strategic Action Fields (Girgensohn, 2018) with a special focus on the director role. One of the findings from University of Gothenburg was that "**With regard to the SAF Visibility it became clear from the data that [Unit of Academic Language] is very visible in the institution. This was surprising for the visitors because certain aspects of visibility were not apparent in the way that they expected them to be.**" (Girgensohn, et al., forthcoming). The explanation for this visibility is however likely to be found in the organizational setup, which links the Unit to many other actors around the university and tightly with University Management as well as representative from Schools/Faculties.

OVERVIEW OF THE CENTRALISED SUPPORTS

Since the beginning of 2018, the centralized support for what is locally termed 'academic language' and provided by the Unit for Academic Language rests on three main key-areas of operation:

a) support for students' writing and academic language development in Swedish and English,
b) support for staff members' writing and professional language development, and
c) pedagogical competence development for university teachers in the area of academic writing assignments

Writing: purposes/goals, processes, knowledge and scholarship, skills, values, professional self
Writing and language development for students (key-area a, see www. ask.gu.se/english/for-students) is traditionally and generally viewed as the major core activity of the unit and provided across all Schools/

Faculties. It consists of: (i) individual tuition as well as group tuition; (ii) course or programme specific interventions; and, (iii) development and production of digital resources for students that can be initiated by the Unit's Language Advisors or content teachers.

The overriding goal of all areas is to support students who want to develop and improve their communication skills regarding texts and presentations they are to produce as part of their studies. All students at the University of Gothenburg are welcome to book a language advising session. Advising sessions can be booked to discuss for example how students can take control of their writing, how to prepare for oral presentations effectively, or other ways in which to develop reading and writing strategies needed to study at university. Advising sessions are available at any stage of a written or oral assignment.

Course/programme specific interventions (ii) range from stand-alone lectures to integrated interventions developed in close cooperation with educational programs and content course leaders and teachers across terms or even years. This is an important area of development for the University and the Unit is frequently asked to help out on both module level and program level.

In parallel with services for students, the Unit also provides services for university staff (key-area b, see www.medarbetarportalen.gu.se/service-support/ASK). All kinds of staff are welcome to book individual advising sessions to develop professionally in their work. Researchers, doctoral students (PhD candidates are employed by the university and are therefore considered staff) but also administrative staff are welcome to book sessions to improve their own professional writing or speaking in Swedish or English. The sessions are designed as meetings around possible ways of improving a presentation or part of a text that is underway and in progress.

The Unit also provides workshops as well as reading and writing retreats for PhD students and researchers. Additionally, the Unit runs a few courses that focus on language in administrative texts and in presentations. For international staff there are specific courses and group language advising. Staff who wish to practice spoken Swedish or English are welcome to join conversation groups.

In connection to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, the Unit has recently developed a small series of didactic seminars on teaching with writing in essay courses for content teachers. As mentioned above, there is also collaboration with the Unit for Pedagogical Development and Interactive Learning (PIL) when it comes to Higher Education Diploma courses for teachers - key-area c (see above). An overview of services provided for teachers can be found at: www.medarbetarportalen.gu.se/service-support/ASK/Seminars+and+Courses+for+Teachers/.

Below follows a visualization of the three key-areas of operation and how they interrelate in a strategic manner (see Figure 1)
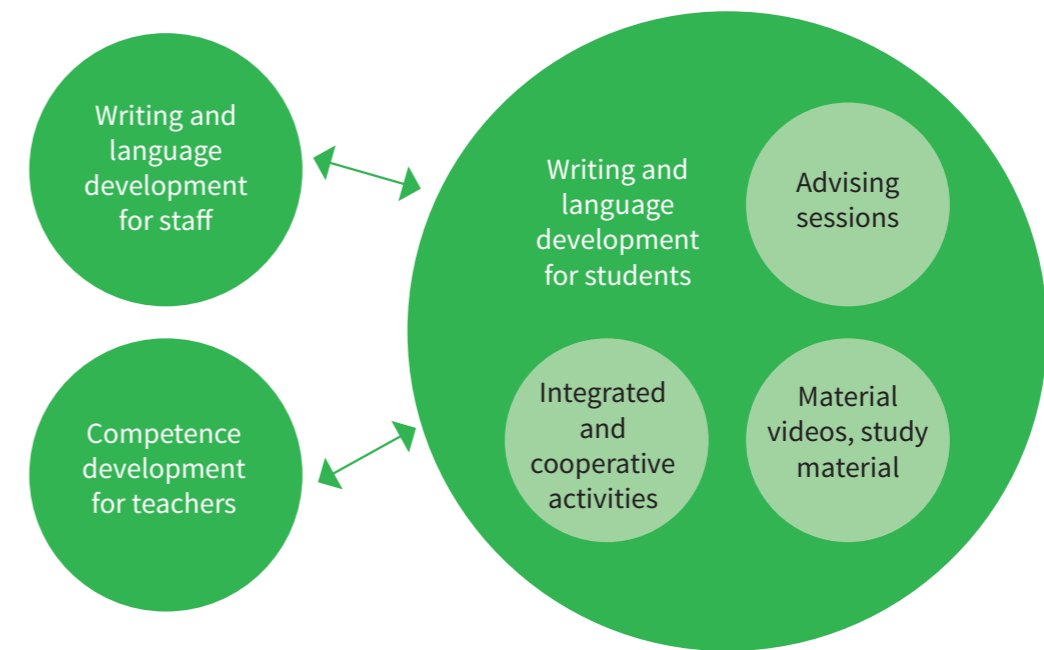
Figure 1: Strategic operational approach of the unit.

Research: purposes/goals, processes, knowledge and scholarship, skills, values, professional self
The Unit for Academic Language is designed and missioned as a support unit and its organization is therefore on the side of departments and line management. This means that there is no formal connection with research groups and research environments. Even if the short-term consequences of this can be managed, the Writing Centre Exchange Project (WCEP) indicated that there are several likely consequences and risks in the long run (Girgensohn et al., forthcoming; STSM Scientific reports from 2018 by O'Sullivan, Girgensohn and Henry). There is an apparent risk for the Unit that that staff members motivated to do research will find other employments where research is included.

Some staff have earned their PhDs but now hold administrative positions with the Unit. Currently (2019), only one staff member holds an academic position with a department and could potentially include an externally funded research component.

OPPORTUNITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE EXISTING MODEL OF SUPPORT

Goal setting, strategic model: The decision to initiate an academic language and writing unit – where language and writing development can sit together so to speak - undoubtedly signifies an important policy step taken by the University of Gothenburg and some institutional preparedness to respond to societal needs. As the STSM-reports have highlighted, the funding of the Unit partly happened in response to, on the one hand, increased efforts on internationalization, and on the other hand increased efforts to recruit students more broadly than before. In fact, a lot of the foundational work of establishing the Unit could initially be motivated as part of efforts for inclusive education and broadening participation, and build on the associated emphasis on needs for students and staff to learn the native language (Swedish). Universities in Sweden are public, government funded bodies and the Swedish Language Act (2009: 600) states that the public sector holds a responsibility "...to ensure that the individual is given access to language..." (Section 1). Hence, an emphasis on Academic Language in Swedish and English was productive for the initiation of this Unit since it was a concrete way for the University to show and act in response to more diverse student and staff cohorts.

From a university perspective, the Unit for Academic Language is firmly based in higher education teaching and learning as the Director is a member of the University Board of Education and answers to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education. This position offers opportunities to influence at the policy and decision-making levels and secures that the operational plan is a response to the needs of departments, educational programs, courses, teachers and students. As a initial strategy forward, inclusion and internationalization were important starting points. Thanks to the continuous work around the Unit within the Board of Education, mission and goals have developed towards more of a general change and an operationalization of academic language and writing as tools for effective studying and researching as well as productive dissemination of scientific findings. (Cf Operational plans (in Swedish) from 2015 to 2019)

CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE EXISTING MODEL OF SUPPORT

While the Writing Centre Exchange Project mainly focused on the strategic work of Centre Directors, it also showed the importance of locating writing efforts not in a single place but in a number of places within a university and make connections with teaching and research solid/tangible and visible (Girgensohn et al., forthcoming). The strategic model above (see Fig 1.) shows that the Unit for Academic Language is set up in a potentially functional way thanks to its three key-areas of operation. Still, being located on the side of education, i.e. outside departments and thereby on the side of line management, and research creates a series of challenges for individual staff at the Unit, for the Unit as such and also, as the WCEP showed, for the University as a whole. Main challenges can be summarized as:

- At the institutional level, there are unproductive tensions around responsibilities for educating students when it comes to the Swedish language. Language competence can be viewed both as a concern for individual support and as a responsibility for education. With the existing organisational structure, the Unit for Academic Language is not permitted to organize basic credit courses, and the department for Swedish is not allowed funding for education below university-level. This dilemma-situation leads to questions concerning whose responsibility it is to provide Swedish language support for those students who need it.

- At the unit level, the WCEP revealed that academic language and writing support in Sweden is generally founded on traditions of individual tutoring with its roots in Departments of Swedish or English, but seldom on international Writing Centre traditions nor English for Academic Purposes. This sociohistorical background implies little awareness of advantages and possibilities that traditional writing centres can provide in many parts of the university among staff members and teachers. To overcome this, the Unit for Academic Language has connected with the European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing (EATAW). The WCEP helped make it an explicit goal to investigate peer tutoring (operational plan 2018), and also provided a concrete connection to the European Writing Centers Association (EWCA).

- Immediate needs put forward by different stakeholders within the university (individual teachers, library staff, other support organizations, students themselves) sometimes need to be reformulated by Unit staff since writing needs are commonly articulated as something practical and unproblematic. To act consciously and productively in such situations, Unit staff members need joint professional development in academic writing support and tutoring. The WCEP physically brought examples of two international Writing Centres to the Unit, and each staff member was invited to meet and discuss with experienced, international colleagues. The WCEP also helped in supplying well-working examples of in-house (i.e. within the Unit) continuous professional development that the Unit for Academic Language can choose to pick up.

- The organizational structure and place as a support function causes difficulties for individual staff members with a PhD who like to combine their work at the Unit with research. One possible way for the individuals is to apply for external founding, and the WCEP was precisely such an opportunity. A more serious challenge at the Unit level is of course how to attract staff with the necessary expertise and research experience since the Unit cannot offer academic positions.

PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIONS, INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

University of Gothenburg was the first site visited in the Writing Centre Exchange Project (WCEP) and the following reflections are based on the overall outcomes after all three visits (Eriksson et al., 2020; Girgensohn et al., forthcoming).

On a national level, i.e. as an example of centralized support for academic language and writing in Sweden, the Unit described here is regarded as a well-thought through initiative (STSM-reports from Gothenburg, where a representative from the Swedish National Network for language and writing support was interviewed). However, for the professionals working in the Unit there is yet no clear writing centre model, WAC model, nor WID model to follow in order to suggest and design strategic operations that can respond to and impact university culture at large. The WCEP project exemplified models that already work and that could be implemented in Gothenburg as well, for example peer tutoring and writing fellows.

Staff members come from a variety of backgrounds (linguistics, literature, teacher education), and an MA degree is required for the position as Language Advisor. A few members of staff have received their PhDs, others come with a teacher degree. Joint development of professional expertise in writing and language advising is mostly built through collaborative competence development within the Unit and the WCEP pointed to several ways this professionalization of the role as advisors could be systematized, for example as professional development sessions where tutoring situations are presented and vetted (as in University of Limerick).

As has been reported above, writing centre initiatives are commonly located and organized on the margins of education in Swedish universities (Chalmers University of Technology being the unique exception). Given that the unit is organized as a support function it is challenging to find a research base for the further development of its activities. Ideally, it would be interesting to partner with other parts of university to investigate how academic language and writing provision become part of students' learning processes. One important and realistic step in this direction could be to shape student-centered, long-term relationships with educational programmes and courses, and become part of research projects and investigations related to these specific educational contexts.

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COMPLEMENTARY LIST OF LINKS:

About the University of Gothenburg: https://www.gu.se/omuniversitetet

European Association the Teaching of Academic Writing: https://www.eataw.eu/

The Faculty of Education: www.uf.gu.se

The Unit for Academic Language website: www.ask.gu.se

The Unit for Academic Language Operational plans (in Swedish only): https://medarbetarportalen.gu.se/organisation/universitetets-organisation/utbildningsnamnden/ask/

The Unit for Pedagogical Development and Interactive Learning (PIL) www.pil.gu.se

The University Board of Education: https://medarbetarportalen.gu.se/organisation/universitetets-organisation/utbildningsnamnden

The University of Gothenburg Study Support: https://studentportal.gu.se/handledning-och-stod/funktionsnedsattning