

Developing teaching competences of academic staff– experiences, dilemmas, challenges



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➤ *„If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow.“*

➤ John Dewey




Outline of my presentation

1. Why the quality of academic teaching has become „a core mission and therefore a core responsibility“ of HE institutions
2. Systemic approach to develop teaching competences of academic staff
3. „A case study“ of Slovenia:
 - A short (hi)story of initiatives in academic SD
Underlying philosophy, methods, evaluation
4. Conclusion: dilemmas and challenges, suggestions for further development



Why the quality of academic teaching is getting so important ?

- Massification of studies, widening access,
- Increased heterogeneity of students,
- Rapid developments in all fields of science and technology, including digital technologies,
- new developments in psychology and neurophysiology of learning, (cognitive neuroscience)
- Education for an unpredictable future means a move from „content“ to „process“ goals and to the development of „soft“ competences in students: systemic, creative, critical thinking, entrepreneurial qualities, life-long curiosity, cooperation, responsibility for an ethical, sustainable development of society...



Report to the European commission... Modernisation of higher Education... (2013)

- We have to achieve a sound rebalancing between research and teaching mission,
- It is the *responsibility of institutions* to ensure that their academic staff are well trained as professional teachers and also the *responsibility of staff* to ensure that they are proficient in the very best pedagogical practices and striving for excellency in teaching“
- 4th recommendation: all staff teaching in higher education institutions should by 2020 have received a certified pedagogical training“.



Numerous international and national initiatives in the past


- UNESCO/CEPES – European Network for Staff Development in Higher Education (1985-1992)
- Maidstone (semiformal network of experts)
- NETTLE - Network of European Tertiary Level Educators
- EFAD --- European Forum for Academic Development
- SEDA - Staff and Educational Development Assoc.

What about „sustainability“ – long-term effects of such initiatives?



...but „there is still a gap between high-level goals and everyday reality“ (Report, 2013)

- „Daily lived reality is an embarrassing disappointment“ (lot of teaching by 19th century standards)
- „Commitment to best practice ... is sporadic at best and frequently reliant on the enlightened commitment of a few individuals (EU Report, 14)
- Big differences between the countries!
- 3“leagues“; 1st – GB, Scandinavian, Baltic countries...
- WHY?



Criteria of quality still favor scientific production and not excellency in teaching

At **institutional** level::

- Academic ranking of universities (Shanghai ranking) – (purely scientific criteria)

versus

- U-Multirank initiative (also social relevance, impact on practice, excellency in T&L)

At **individual** level:

- Criteria of recruitment and promotion: quantity of scientific production versus excellency in teaching („pedagogic portfolio“)



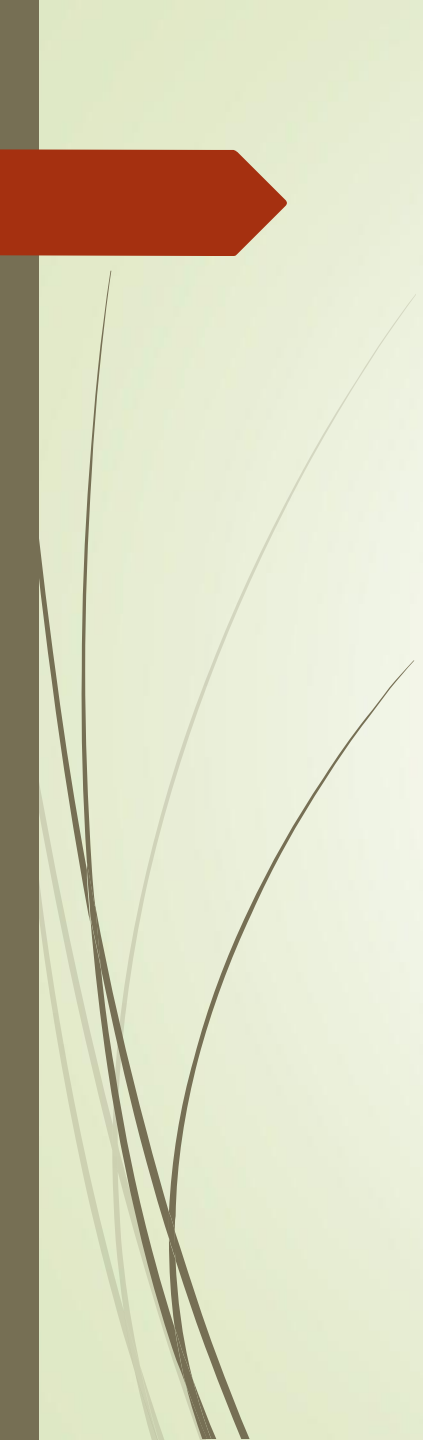
Developing the three dimensions of professional competences – a demanding task

**Knowledge,
understanding**

**Attitudes and
values**

**Professional
skills**



- 
- How to promote professional development and change in all three areas of competencies: knowing – acting – valueing?
 - No general shift **from teaching to learning** in the process of higher education is possible without taking into account the **subjective side** of this shift – the teachers' (mis)conceptions, implicit theories and attitudes about university teaching, student learning, their role and the role of students.



Professional development of academics – changing focus (Kugel)


- 1. focus – **self** („Will I survive?“)
- 2. focus – **subject** („Do I cover all ideas, facts...?“)
- 3. focus – **student**
 - As **receptive** („I have to improve presentation“)
 - As **active** (discussion, questions are included),
 - As **independent** (is able also to study on his own).

Transition is not easy; role of conflicting experiences, need of training, support

A good teacher is like...

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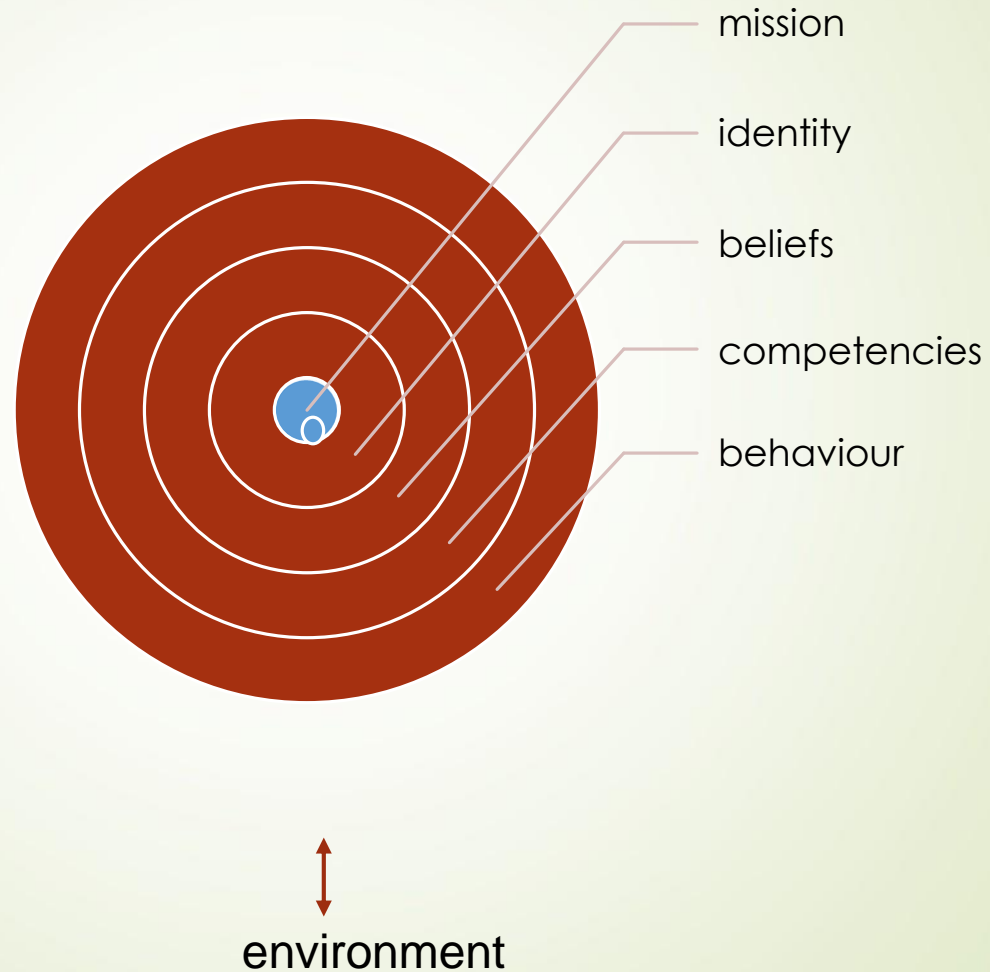





2. Some characteristics of successful SD activities – systemic approach

- Cognitive – constructivist and humanist orientation – knowledge can not be „given“ (transfer theory)
- University teacher as „reflective professional“
- Trying to develop competencies (visible part) and also „quality from within“:
- personal identity, sense of mission.

The onion model of professional development (Korthagen)







3. A case study of Slovenia - a short (hi)story

From the 70-ies to 2000 - »Early birds«:

- Prof. Vlado Schmidt - my „mentor“
- First programmes, seminars, publications
- A series of public talks to raise awareness
- Many short and a longer (systematic) course
- International contacts (UNESCO/CEPES, TEMPUS, NETTLE), also with colleagues from Croatia dr. Bratanić, dr. Ledić, dr. Mužić, dr. Švajcer...)
- Summer schools with eminent guests



A short (hi)story – from 2000 on

- The first accredited 45-hours' course
 - Textbooks (on group work, assessment, lecturing)
 - Research, publishing, reporting (ATEE, ISATT),
 - Courses for special groups (nurses, engineers...)
 - International conferences in Slovenia - IUT, CMEPIUS
 - Professional association SDVD (-2013)
 - Staff development included in the EU project on quality (KUL 2013-2015).
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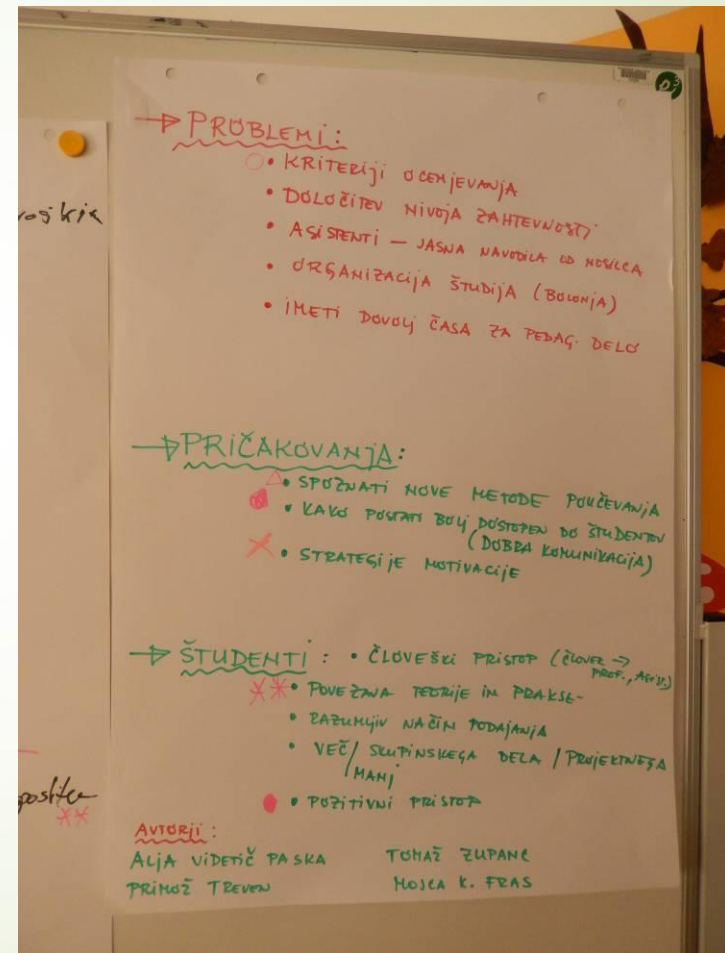


Example of a course (45 h.)– principles and methods

- Team teaching (two trainers)
- „Teach as you preach“
- Experiential and collegial learning
- Varied methods that participants can use later
- Alternating action and reflection
- Open to participants' suggestions and reactions

To start: problems and expectations of participants; also students' perspective

- Central problem: students' motivation
- Expectations: to get useful „tips“
- Students' perspective:
 - Best and worst study experiences
 - What should professors learn?



„Teach as you preach“ – the use of „student-centered“ methods



- interactive lectures
- different models of group work
- mini lectures with video feedback
- discussion on reading assignments - LTD
- peer observation of „real“ teaching
- written report on mini research

Evaluation of courses

- Formative –
„the talking wall“
- Summative –
internal, official
- Long-term effects
(1 - 2 years later)






Conclusions: Strong points

Good evaluation results

- ▶ 90% of participants: the course gives useful informations
- ▶ the course motivated 87% of participants to improve their teaching competencies and introduce changes, like more interaction , group work...
- ▶ *„I started to see and understand learning process throug student eyes“.*



Conclusions – what was not so good?

- We do not know about long-term effects of these courses on student learning and results,
- Participants „lonely“ - colleagues often indifferent ,
- Those teachers that need it most, do not come, (is „mandatory“ a solution?)
- Our HE policy still does not encourage excellency in teaching (by election criteria, establishing centres, rewards etc.),



4.1 Dilemmas and challenges of academic staff development

- How to balance quality and quantity - maintain high level quality with big numbers?
- How to adapt it to different needs? (different disciplines, junior, senior staff...)
- How to „train the trainers“?
- How to avoid bureaucratisation ?
- How to foster „culture of teaching“ as a natural part of academic culture?
- How to maintain enthusiasm, „flow“?



4.2 Some suggestions

- Combine stick-and-carrot policy,
- Award excellency in teaching,
- Build it into promotion criteria,
- Promote R&D projects (grants), conferences...
- Treat students as partners,
- Create learning communities,
- Establish centres, SD units with best experts,
- Widen international networking...

PATIENCE AND COOPERATION!

„Not alone“





More in:

- Marentič Požarnik B. in Lavrič A. (2015). Kako se učijo učitelji: (video)povratna informacija kot spodbuda za učiteljev razvoj. Vzgoja in izobraževanje, Vol. XLV, N.4: 7-15
- Marentič Požarnik B. in Lavrič A. (2015). Fostering the Quality of Teaching and Learning by Developing the “Neglected Half” of University Teacher’s Competencies. CEPS. Vol. 5, N.2: 73-94.
- Marentič Požarnik, B. How do university teachers perceive incentives and obstacles in modernising their teaching. Conference Improving University Teaching, Ljubljana, 15-17 July 2015