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# ULCA PATHWAY TO EXCELLENT SCHOOLS

## KNOWLEDGE-SHARING & NETWORKING IN EDUCATION

**EDITOR:** Markéta Rusnáková

# ULCA PATHWAY TO EXCELLENT SCHOOLS:

## KNOWLEDGE SHARING & NETWORKING IN EDUCATION

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# Content

# INTRODUCTION

We present to you a publication that is a joint work of teachers from different levels of the educational system. In this publication, the knowledge, experience and skills of teachers/educators who perceive the development of the school system, especially classroom processes in direct work with children, in their countries, have been combined. Thanks to the Erasmus+ Strategic partnerships project „Upgrade with Learner-centred Approach", a team of innovative teachers has been created. Innovative teachers, who want to develop themselves and their work in the classroom. However, they do not want to keep their knowledge and experience to themselves and therefore summarized it in this publication.

In November 2022, as one of the outputs of the above-mentioned project, we organized the conference ULCA Pathway to Excellent Schools - Knowledge-sharing and Networking in Education. This conference was a key event organized by a team of project partners led by a team from the Faculty of Education of the Catholic University in Ružomberok

Teachers from 5 European countries were involved in the project: Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia and Slovenia.

The main objectives of the project were:

- to increase the quality of University education through the implementation of the learner-centred approach,
- to develop excellent schools based on the EFQM model of excellence,
- to develop the Learn&Lead functional self-management and development pathway of a teacher within the school environment.

Our goal was to present the ideas and intellectual outputs of the Erasmus+ KA203 project and launch an innovative network of schools including primary schools, secondary schools, universities and private educational institutions - the ULCA network of teachers and schools. We offer you all unique experiences and tools for the development of teachers and school managers in the learner -centered approach. The conference was attended by educators and teachers from many countries around the world (Lithuania, Latvia, North Macedonia, Slovenia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Philippines, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Indonesia and of course Slovakia).

The presented publication is a summary of different views and experiences on the same issue, which is the improvement of the quality of educational institutions and educational processes in the classroom. What is interesting about this publication is its multiculturalism. Colleagues from Kyrgyzstan deal in their article with the issue of work-related stress among young beginning teachers. Jana Chynoradská presents educational courses that are intended for everyone, both teachers in practice and future or beginning teachers, regardless on what school they teach. In her article, Gabriela Hrkľová shares her experiences from the above mentioned courses, which she completed as part of the project. In doing so, she offers a view of the courses from the inside, from the other side as a participant and a teacher. In their article, Adela Vitkovska and Vanda Novokšonova focus on the second area addressed in the ULCA project, which is the building of excellence in educational institutions. Bohuslav Stupák's articles offer insight into the possibilities of implementing the approaches trained within the project. The article by Markéta Rusnáková and Branislav Kľuska presents new subjects for future teachers implemented at the Faculty of Education, Catholic University in Ružomberok. Slovakia. The subjects are

also one of the outputs of the ULCA project and their content is aimed at expanding knowledge in the field of learner-centred approach and in the Master's degree at the self-development/ self-management of the teacher. These approaches are linked in the development of teacher competencies. The final article of the publication by Jana Chovancová and Štefan Tkačik is devoted to the implementation of the principles of a learner-centred approach in the framework of the accreditation of higher education programs at the Faculty of Education, Catholic University in Ružomberok, Slovakia.

The publication is a comprehensive summary of the outputs of the Upgrade with Learner-Centered approach project, which offers development opportunities both for future teachers and for teachers with many years of experience.

Markéta Rusnáková
project coordinator

# My personal experiences of Learned Centered Approach Teaching (LCA)

Gabriela Hrkľová

## Abstract

This article introduces a brief overview of the history and basic principles which formed the modern design of Learner-Centered Teaching. The main body is dedicated to my personal experiences of this kind of education during a summer school at Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius. I, along with my colleagues from the Catholic University in Ružomberok, was part of a ULCA project and attended a two-part of course: "Learn & Lead Self-management" and "Learner-Centered Approach Theory.

**Keywords:** Humanism psychology. Constructivism. Carl Rogers. Learner-Centered Approach Theory. Learn & Lead Self-management.

## Introduction

Recently, learner-centered teaching has increasingly been encouraged in education. This approach is not a single teaching method, but emphasizes a variety of different ways of changing the thinking of teachers from teacher-centered teaching. The basic idea of learner-oriented education comes from several scientific disciplines, and its creation is a historical matter.

Firstly, it began with the pedagogical theories of ancient philosophers and teachers: Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. In their works, they focus on the student themselves, the development of their knowledge and skills, and the importance of discovery, critical thinking, and dialectical discussion (Lojová, 2019). Socrates' principles of education are captured in his often-quoted line, "an unexamined life is not worth living," where he accents the experiential pattern of inquiry (Allison et al., 2011). John Amos Comenius, a 17th-century Czech educationalist, appears as a teacher of Europe who wanted to "create a human being through education, objective demands of knowledge and society, the development of his mind and acting abilities, for the common good" (Sitarska, 2019). Many school reforms in which the pupil is the center of pedagogical thinking took place in the first half of the 20th century (Montessori, Waldorf pedagogy), and this period is also referred to as the century of the child (Lojová, 2017).

The change of education from a teacher-centered to learner-centered approach (LCA) was influenced mainly by psychology – specifically, humanistic psychology. This began in the Middle Ages with the basic belief that every person has worth and rational thought. In the 15th century, the early humanism movement began in Europe. Modern humanism emerged in psychology around the mid-1950s (Jingna, 2012). In general, theorists of humanistic learning define learning as the holistic growth of the person, including cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal domains (Purswell, 2019). It is necessary to mention the American humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers (1902–1987) and his therapeutic approach, with the positive perception of the person (client-centered counseling), which was modified and extended to various fields – especially education, as an approach oriented towards the student. Rogers observed that: "in teaching, it is necessary to focus not only on cognitive aspects, but also on the emotions and the whole personality of the student and create an environment that allows each student to be himself, to move on the path to self-knowledge, independence in learning and full self-realization" (Lojo-

vá, 2017).

Another theory of education which influenced LCA strategies is cognitive constructivism, grounded in the work of Jean Piaget (Gandhi, Mukherji, 2020). Piaget is concerned with two processes in ways of learning. Through accommodation, individuals construct new knowledge from their experiences, and via assimilation they incorporate these new experiences into an already existing framework without changing this framework (Gondwe, 2020). Social constructivism, originated by L. S. Vygotskij, stresses the fundamental role of collaboration among learners in the development of cognition (Gondwe, 2020). Constructivism is not a specific pedagogy, but its principles are incorporated into teaching strategies and promote active learning.

## Personal experiences of summer school at Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius, Litva

While the introduction provided a brief overview of the history and basic principles of learner-centered teaching, this part of the article concerns my personal experiences of this kind of education. I, along with my colleagues from the Catholic University of Ružomberok, was part of a ULCA project. In the summer of 2022, we participated in a summer school at Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius.

At the beginning of the summer school in Vilnius I was stressed as to whether I could complete it; I had no idea and little information regarding the course, and had difficulties expressing my thoughts in English.

The first course was **"Learn & Lead Self-Management,"** with Dr. Jana Chynoradská. This was a psychological part of the summer school, where we learnt to know ourselves better. The study reminded us of many obvious things, but we also learnt a lot of new and useful material – not just for our professional lives, but also for our interpersonal relationships. Personally, I enjoyed staying in Vilnius without my family so that I could fully focus on developing personally.

At the beginning, Dr. Jana encouraged us and created a good atmosphere for us to introduce ourselves. When I saw colleagues – now friends – from Macedonia, Slovenia, Latvia, and Slovakia introduce and talk about their personal lives, it was a real help to me. Therefore, the first thing I learnt was: when we observe we are learning. In so doing, I reduced my stress levels and could focus on the theory.

I realized that we have a body, heart, and mind, which work together and influence our behavior. I then discovered which kind of intelligence is the strongest in me, and which kind of intelligence I have to work on.

It is good to be aware of the ICEBERG theory – the idea of a large iceberg floating on the sea, where most of it is hidden. We have to be respectful to everyone and their behavior, because we don't know what is "under the sea of our colleagues, students, and learners." Beyond this, what can we do to improve our relationships? There is another useful theory here – mirroring people, which can help us to have empathy with them as a way of better understanding the people around us and helping us to communicate with them in a more appropriate way. I found mirroring and working with my emotions to be very helpful – not just at school, but also in my family life. Personally, as I am raising three teenage boys, it is difficult to stay calm sometimes, and this workshop taught me to deal with anger. Letting anger out and removing myself from

bad situations to calm down is a very useful theory for me.

The next interesting element was writing a letter of appreciation to each other. To provide and receive encouragement from the people who were with us was fascinating, and we all had a very emotional day. I received a very nice compliment from my colleague, and we found that we had many things in common. I received an appreciation letter from a friend from a different country, which encouraged me greatly and strengthened my confidence. The third letter was from a young girl, a colleague from Vilnius. What was especially thoughtful was that she gave encouragement to everyone, and this really energized me. I learnt a lot from her: *be observant of people you live with, pick up on their nice attributes, and let them know*.

It was useful to be made aware of other competences for a good teacher: *self-awareness, self-management, emotional balance, adaptability, open-mindedness, achievement-orientation, and a positive outlook.*

The second week was spent with prof. Gabi Lojová and the **Learner-Centered Approach Theory**. She introduced us to the seven main principles of learner-centered teaching versus traditional teaching, based on the humanistic psychology of Carl Rogers and sources of constructivism.

It was great to get to know this excellent strategy of teaching and perceiving and approaching learners. Over these days, we gained relevant knowledge on how to *create a positive learning atmosphere for learners*. This was not just theory – we really felt this in our lessons, creating a fantastic positive atmosphere with *kindness*. Prof. Gabi was extremely supportive in our discussions, and introduced *her experience from her practice*. I particularly enjoyed the short warm-up activities, where we had a pleasant time with our colleagues. Thanks to our friends from Macedonia, we learned a unique dance with lovely music. It was a great opportunity to rest from the main topic of the lesson, and on the other hand an ideal way to get to know our classmates better.

It was very important to learn the principle of the *content of education* and to find the right way to gain relevant and *meaningful knowledge associated with everyday life* – not just to memorize scientific information. For learners, it is crucial to let them *be active: to discover, feel information and finally understand what they learned – and be proud of it!*

For me as a biology teacher, it is great to find brain-based learning in practise. Different stimuli initiate different parts of the hemispheres: cognitive operations take place in the left side, and the perception of feeling pictures utilize the right hemisphere. It has been observed that more success is achieved in cases when both hemispheres are used in harmony and collaboration, rather than working separately. This theory confirms another LCA strategy: *teach cognitive and affective domains together.*

Another useful LCA topic was *better knowing learners, accepting their individual differences, and finding and developing their multiple intelligences.* I particularly remember a picture with different animals, where all of them have the same task: to climb a large tree. This is easy for a bird, and perhaps for a snake – but what about an elephant or fish?

It was really helpful that there was a community of participants in the course, involving colleagues from different schools: primary, secondary and universities from different countries. We shared our teaching problems, and everybody could offer their own strategies to solve them before prof. Gabi gave us her solution.

## Conclusion in my educational practice

LCA is not a method; LCA believes that educating is a qualitative change in a teacher's way. It has spread throughout the whole world, but many studies indicate that the application of this theory requires two basic items: "high levels of awareness and specialized skills on behalf of teachers, together with encouraging school environments" (Marwan, 2017; Shehadeh, 2018; Troyan, Cammarata, & Martel, 2017 in Badjadi, 2020).

Personally for me, as a university teacher, LCA and "Learn & Lead Self-Management" influenced me greatly. I am aware that I am at the beginning of a new education journey, but I am convinced and determined to try and retain all that I have learned during the summer school in Vilnius. As I know that it is very important to encourage students through active learning methods, I recommend the publication of Čapek (2018) – a great source of both practical active methods and methods of evaluation. Throughout the course, I gained many useful tips, which professor Gabi used at the beginning of each lesson: *"What is relevant to you? And what would you like to know more about? What is new for you and what is the most helpful?"* These created quick brainstorms and helped students to be involved in the topic of the lesson. Another tip was the ping-pong rule, which is excellent for activating students: do not answer questions from students immediately, but first ask different students for their opinions. Finally, do not be embarrassed by or disappointed in your students when they don't know everything, because nothing works 100% of the time – otherwise known as the *70/30 rule*. I will spread these ideas through the University work of my students.

Finally, thanks to the whole of the ULCA program, especially prof. Gabi and dr. Jana, for the opportunity to be a part of your team. Thanks for delivering this fantastic way of education, for sharing the experience of your practice, and for your kindness. Thanks for the chance to start a long journey to becoming a better woman and teacher. Finally, thanks to prof. Irena and her team for their hospitality at Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius.

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# Innovative Training of future Learner-Centered Teachers

Markéta Rusnáková, Branislav Kľuska

## Abstract

A learner-centered approach (LCA) views learners as active agents. They bring their own knowledge, past experiences, education, and ideas – and this impacts how they take on new information and learn. It differs significantly from a traditional instructor-centered approach. Traditional learning approaches were informed by behaviorism, which sees learners as 'blank slates' and instructors/teachers as experts who must impart all the relevant information. This approach sees learners as respondents to external stimuli.

As university educators of future teachers, we see the importance of educating future teachers in this approach not only within selected subjects, where this approach is involved in theory, but specifically through specially designed study courses and the experiential method right from the beginning of their university studies. That is why we have created a system of new study courses through which students will acquire skills in the LCA approach, which they will be able to practice within the framework of their lessons in model ULCA schools.

**Keywords:** Learner-Centered Approach. Learner. Teacher. Learn&Lead;

## Introduction

In 2019, as a team of university pedagogues and innovative teachers from Harmony Academy, a complex project focused on the development of education at all levels of the education system from our point of view. We realized that unless we work with teachers in practice and future teachers/students to support their self-development and change their perspective on traditional education, the success rate will be very low. We therefore created the Upgrade with the Learner-Centered Approach (ULCA) project, where universities, primary schools, private schools and non-governmental organizations became our partners.

In this project, we are creating a common system in which the continuous professional development of teachers in the learner-centered approach (LCA) will be defined, as well as the school setting in which this approach will be carried out. We focus on the inevitable changes that will allow this project to be implemented in full and successfully. We take a holistic approach in which we will work on all levels of training in synergy. We begin with the development of teachers' competencies and their self-management and leadership. Then, we look at the school setting and build quality on the EFQM model of excellence, the purpose of which is to improve the performance of organizations and their ability to manage change and transformation. We design the guidelines for primary schools that choose the transformation in the LCA, where we follow Gabriela Lojová's 7 key principles: active learning, content (relevant knowledge), cognitive and affective domains, approach to learners (acceptance, encouragement), positive learning atmosphere, the teacher's role and the learner's role.

The main objectives of the project are:

- to increase the quality of University education through the implementation of the LCA,

- developing excellent schools based on the EFQM model of excellence,

- developing the Learn&Lead functional self-management and development pathway of a teacher within the school environment.

## New study courses in the system of higher education of future teachers

In line with the proposal of the latest accreditation standards in the Slovak Republic issued in 2019 by the Slovak Accreditation Agency for University (higher) Education, we decided in this project to focus on the professional development of educators and help them achieve their excellence through the structured competency-based career path. Student-centered learning and teaching plays an important role in motivating, self-reflecting and self-involving in the learning process. Innovation in the development of this curriculum is in cooperation between University teachers, primary school teachers and experts from all partner countries. This interconnects theory with real practice in the classroom. It is not standard within the education of future teachers at faculties of education in Slovakia to create innovative modern education courses during the undergraduate level of future teacher education. Therefore, we consider the creation of five new subjects at the bachelor's and master's degree levels – specially created only for LCA and Learn&Lead – as a breakthrough.

In terms of a comprehensive approach to the further education of teachers in a student-centered approach and in the self-development of Learn&Lead teachers, we realized that future teachers must already receive the basics of these approaches as part of their undergraduate education – not only at the theoretical level, but also at the practical level. We understand that students/future teachers receive the basics of these approaches as part of their studies, but we decided not only to deepen this knowledge, but also to anchor it practically through practice in ULCA model schools. Therefore, as part of the ULCA project, we created five new study courses in teams – three at the bachelor's level of education and two for master's students. We included these subjects in the study programs as optional subjects. In our bachelor's study programs, we focus on a LCA, and in the master's study programs, we develop students' self-development and work on their self-improvement in the role of future teachers. We dedicate two semesters to the Learn&Lead approach in the master's degree of education, while theory is always combined with an internship in a ULCA model school. As part of the self-development of future teachers, we realize how important knowledge of foreign languages is. Therefore, students can complete this practice not only at Slovak ULCA model primary schools, but also at all foreign partner ULCA model schools in Slovenia, North Macedonia and Lithuania. The new study subjects will not be taught by only one lecturer, as we are usually used to in our higher schools, but all subjects will be taught in teams so that each lecturer has the opportunity to put their individual approach into the lectures. It should be mentioned that the newly created subjects were opened not only at the Pedagogical Catholic University in Ružomberok, but also at the partner university – Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Both groups of subjects are related to each other, so we want to create comprehensive training for future teachers. It is important for us not only to have a strong teacher in the class, but also to prepare the future teacher so that they can prepare adequately and well for their learner-centered class.

## Learner-centred approach study courses

The design of the LCA courses is based on the theoretical and practical understanding of education, and especially of the teacher training process. The LCA is one of the most prevalent educational notions in the contemporary European society.[1] The educational theory underlines the fact that human beings learn by actively constructing and assimilating knowledge rather than by passive reception of different facts and isolated information.[2] As Peter Mika and Peter Gates have rightly stated, learner-centred education is regarded as an effective answer to the dominance of a transmissive teacher-centred education, which is blamed for leading to rote-learning and stifling critical and creative thinking among pupils.[3]

To shortly summarizing the characteristic of LCA we can point out the basic features of this approach. Applying the learner centred approach in the classroom a teacher shifts away from teaching and learning activities which are fundamentally teacher-centred to teaching and learning opportunities which put the learner at the centre. This approach fucuses also on the pupil's learning outcomes. Teaching and learning are broadened to include activities that produce desirable learning outcomes.[4]

Although the LCA focuses on pupils' activities in the classroom and strongly emphasizes their own learning process as well as their process of constructing and assimilating knowledge, the implementation of the LCA absolutely depends on the teacher's ability to teach in a learner-centered way.

Statistically speaking, high-quality teachers are the strongest influence on learner achievement. Many factors contribute to a learner's academic performance, including individual characteristics and family experiences. However, research consistently suggests that, among school-related factors, teachers matter most.[5]

Teachers who are appropriate and are able to effectively apply an LCA articulate what society expects of students, design educational experiences to enhance their learning, and create opportunities for students to learn. These instructors value student learning and achievement, as well as critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity. They also aim to create critical learning frameworks and force students to grapple with critical issues.[6]

It is obvious that the shift from teacher-centered education to the LCA needs to be forced by educational policy makers, and needs to be reflected in the teacher's preparation during university studies and life-long teacher training.

The implementation of the LCA in the teacher training at higher education institutions involves more changes and adjustments of the higher educational system: the content of teacher train-

1 Cf. Michele Schweisfurth, 'Is Learner-Centred Education "Best Practice"?', *The UNICEF Education Think Piece Series*, 2019, 1–5.

2 Cf. Steve Olusegun Bada and Steve Olusegun, 'Constructivism Learning Theory: A Paradigm for Teaching and Learning', *Journal of Research & Method in Education* 5, no. 6 (2015): 66–70.

3 Peter Mtika and Peter Gates, 'Developing Learner-Centred Education among Secondary Trainee Teachers in Malawi: The Dilemma of Appropriation and Application', *International Journal of Educational Development* 30, no. 4 (1 July 2010): 396, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2009.12.004.

4 Cf. Ian Tudor, 'Teacher Roles in the Learner-Centred Classroom', *ELT Journal* 47, no. 1 (1993): 22–31. Gabriela Lojová, *Učme cudzí jazyk efektívnejšie: Prístup zameraný na žiaka* (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo UK v Bratislave, 2019), 16–18.

5 Cf. Tudor, 'Teacher Roles in the Learner-Centred Classroom', 22–31. Lojová, *Učme cudzí jazyk efektívnejšie: prístup zameraný na žiaka*, 43.

6 Mtika and Gates, 'Developing Learner-Centred Education among Secondary Trainee Teachers in Malawi', 397.

ing, the curriculum of lectures, the culture of the university, and classroom structure, but also the personal stance and teaching methods used by university teaching staff.

In designing the new LCA courses, we would like to avoid the imbalance of theory and practice in teacher training which contemporary research points to. Very often, although the LCA is present in the curriculum of teacher training, students report their disappointment when they are in pedagogic preparation classes in which a frontal lecture method is dominantly used to present learner-centered education. The transmissive lecture method remains the dominant method of higher education during teacher training. Consequently, future teachers learn about the LCA in non-learner-centred way, and they have no opportunity to experience the LCA and its benefits for active learning in their classroom. [7]

This observation is contrary to the argument made by sociologist Dan C. Lortie[8] that teachers are mostly influenced by their "apprenticeship of observation" – those years where they sit as pupils in classrooms, forming their image of teaching based upon what they "see" going on.[9] Imitation is one of the most natural methods of learning, as Aristotle pointed out.[10] Thus, it is more than possible that future teachers would imitate their present or past teachers.

A significant result of reflection on this is that a practice-based curriculum in teacher education, incorporating "pedagogies of enactment" and including the extensive use of "approximation of practice", should be encouraged. It is also a challenge to involve the LCA not only in the curricula of teacher training study programs, but also in the methodology of lectures at university.

These theoretical premises were kept in mind when designing the three undergraduate LCA courses (LCA 1-3) and implementing them in the teacher training curriculum.[11]

The goal of these courses is for students not only to know but also to master the principles of the LCA. In creating these LCA-focused courses, we assumed that the LCA should become part of the didactic skills of future teachers. LCA is not a particular method but a specific philosophy of education.[12] Therefore, we see it as crucial that the future teacher does not view the LCA as one from many approaches to be decided on before a particular lesson in terms of whether to apply it or not, but that they adopt the LCA as their basic pedagogical stance.

The personality's cognitive, affective and volitional aspects need to be acted upon to form each human (and also educational) stance. Therefore, we have tried to compose these courses in such a way that the student receives adequate knowledge of the LCA approach and at the same time that they experience the concrete principles in the classroom in a live learning process. It is important that the live experience evokes concrete feelings in a student, that it affects their affective side, and that they not only know the LCA approach but have experienced it and have a relationship with it. Finally, it is essential that these subjects are not only theoretical introductions but that they are realized in terms of the LCA.

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7 Cf. Mtika and Gates, 397–400.

8 Dan C. Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study* (University of Chicago press, 2020).

9 Peter D. John, 'Understanding the Apprenticeship of Observation in Initial Teacher Education: Exploring Student Teachers' Implicit Theories of Teaching and Learning', in *Liberating the Learner* (Routledge, 2013), 106–23.

10 Cf. Gabriel Zoran, 'Between Appropriation and Representation: Aristotle and the Concept of Imitation in Greek Thought', *Philosophy and Literature* 39, no. 2 (2015): 468–86; Paul Woodruff, 'Aristotle on Mimesis', *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics* 73 (1992): 73.

11 In addition to the authors of the paper, the following teachers of the Catholic University in Ružomberok participated in the creation of these courses: ng. *Renáta Bellová*, PhD.; PhDr. Slavomíra Bellová, PhD.; MVDr. *Gabriela Hrkľová*, PhD.; Ing. Jana Jacková, PhD.

12 Cf. Lojová, *Učme Cudzí Jazyk Efektívnejšie:*, 18.

In the "*Learner-Centered Approach 1*" course, students will first learn the axiological foundations of the LCA – the principles of the humanization of education, the foundations of Carl Rogers' psychology,[13] and an understanding of developmental psychology and neuroscience in pedagogy. Then, students must become convinced that the LCA is based on more than just philosophical premises. We now have explicit knowledge, which is experimentally validated, from developmental psychology, the psychology of learning, and neuroscience. This knowledge reveals the patterns of active learning, which means that the educational process no longer has to be difficult and demand both teacher and pupil, but a natural process.[14] Learning is a natural human tendency, and it is teacher's task to support this process.

The courses *"Learner-centred approach 2-3"* courses will be devoted successively to the seven principles of the LCA as developed in the publications of prof. Lojová: Active learning; Content (relevant, meaningful knowledge); Cognitive and affective domains; Approach to learners (acceptance, encouragement); Positive learning atmosphere; Teacher´s role; Learners´ role.[15] Gradually, we want to deepen, together with our students, the understanding of the LCA principles. As teachers of these courses, we have all been through the LCA training led by Professor Lojova. Still, we also understand that learning the LCA is an ongoing process. We want to go through this process with our students because we know that education is a two-way process. We consider the biggest challenge of these courses to be that we not only educate about the LCA, but that we can shape future teachers in a learner-centered way.

Contemporary research points to the fact that "Don't do it as I do, do it as I say"[16] is often the way in which education is delivered. We want to avoid this. We have experience from the teachers who taught us, who have influenced the way we teach today – both from the positive and the opposing side. People learn by imitation, from when they are small children. This is highlighted by neuroscience – that what is seen and then repeated creates strong neural connections.[17] Our goal, therefore, is to teach LCA subjects in a way that helps to develop good pedagogical habits. Thus, when designing the course syllabuses, we paid great attention not only to their content but also to their methodological and didactic aspects. This was – and still is – a significant challenge for us. That is, in higher education didactics, there is not much emphasis on activating methods in higher education that would promote active learning processes in students in a positive way. Higher education, more than any other discipline, is characterized by its transmissive nature – we select content from scientific disciplines and simply want to transfer it to the student. Further, we mistakenly assume that the student will acquire this content on their own, connect it to life and be able to apply it almost automatically in their later practice. This is a mistaken assumption that reduces the quality of teacher education. Therefore, we have tried to design the courses in such a way that the specific way of teaching leads students to naturally

13 Cf. especially Carl R. Rogers, *Freedom to Learn : A View of What Education Might Become* (Merrill, 1969).

14 Jan De Houwer, Dermot Barnes-Holmes, and Agnes Moors, 'What Is Learning? On the Nature and Merits of a Functional Definition of Learning', *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review* 20 (2013): 631–42.

15 Cf. especially: Lojová, *Učme cudzí jazyk efektívnejšie:*, 67–228. See the others important papers of the professor Lojova: Gabriela Lojova, 'Humanizing English Language Teaching in Slovakia', *XLinguae Journal* 9, no. 4 (2016): 30–36; Gabriela Lojova, 'Application of Selected Principles of the Learner-Centred Approach to English Grammar Teaching', *Xlinguae* 10, no. 4 (2017): 278; Gabriela Lojová, 'Foreign Language Learning/Acquisition at an Early Age', in *Foreign Language Acquisition at an Early Age. Proceedings from the Conference Organized and Hosted by Faculty of Education, Masaryk University on March*, vol. 16, 2006, 43–57; Gabriela Lojová, 'Neuropsychologické Aspekty Učenia Sa a Vyučovania Cudzích Jazykov', *Philologia* 31, no. 2 (2021): 19–34.

16 Cf. Mtika and Gates, 'Developing Learner-Centred Education among Secondary Trainee Teachers in Malawi', 400.

17 Cf. Marcel Brass and Cecilia Heyes, 'Imitation: Is Cognitive Neuroscience Solving the Correspondence Problem?', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 9, no. 10 (2005): 489–95; Elizabeth A. Reynolds Losin, Mirella Dapretto, and Marco Iacoboni, 'Culture in the Mind's Mirror: How Anthropology and Neuroscience Can Inform a Model of the Neural Substrate for Cultural Imitative Learning', *Progress in Brain Research* 178 (2009): 175–90.

acquire the LCA.

## Study courses Learn&Lead

The aim of the Learn&Lead course is to develop the potential of students in areas related to management and self-management and prepare them for the application of skills related to leadership in the educational environment. This involves further strengthening and expanding the key competences of future teachers in the areas of metacognition, communication, resilience and orientation in a global context, which are important for their professional development, while being able to apply Learn&Lead principles in all areas. After completing the course, they will be able to plan and implement their professional growth and self-development; they will be able to identify with the professional role and school.

Within the course, we have defined several areas through which we want to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies of students and future teachers in the field of Learn&Lead:

The student critically evaluates, integrates and applies the knowledge of key educational areas into their own pedagogical/didactic activities. They can independently design, plan, project, organize, lead, analyze and evaluate the implementation of the educational process at the level of primary education using innovative approaches and methods, as well as implement and evaluate solutions to methodological, professional, practical or scientific problems in the field. They use new media in a targeted way, and can apply them digitally in primary education.

The student will organize and methodologically lead professional (subject) teams in a primary school or in the methodological pedagogical center. They propose solutions to methodological, professional and practical problems, including the creation of methodological texts and teaching aids. They can co-operate effectively in the creation of school-wide and community projects related to primary education.

Students will gain the ability to form their own management in the educational process in primary education and use a range of educational strategies developing students' competencies with respect to educational goals defined in curricular documents and students' needs, and have the ability to independently, innovatively and responsibly design, manage, organize, analyze, evaluate educational process at the level of primary education.

Students will gain the ability to critically develop democratic values in the educational process with an emphasis on creating an inclusive and stimulating environment and the ability to promote and apply moral principles that represent a humane and ethical approach in the field of education.

Students will gain the ability to use effective communication strategies with internal and external environments, while the graduate is characterized by a high degree of independence and foresight in a known and unknown environment. They are communicatively competent, flexible, have developed critical thinking, can manage conflicts, cooperate in a team and cooperate effectively with the external environment.

Students will gain the ability to critically and professionally present the results of their own study or results from educational practice and the ability to effectively self-assess and self-develop with regard to their professional competencies and personal growth.

We recognize that it is not only important to teach students about teacher self-development and a LCA, but to teach them through this approach. The goal is for them to experience learning for themselves through this approach. Therefore, we have included various educational techniques and methods in the educational methods in this study course.

It is very important for us, as teachers, that students really experience schools operating on the principles of the LCA and Learn&Lead. This is why we included excursions in our partner schools in the course. Right at the beginning of the master's course, they will see the management system of the Hramona private school. In this course, we also use: experiential methods of education, group work, working in pairs, role-playing, discussion, training of practical skills, analysis of documents, internships in model primary schools in Slovakia and abroad, videos from conducting a conversation with a child, etc.

If we want to be fully in the line of the LCA and Learn&Lead in education, we must also follow these approaches in connection with the evaluation of students within these subjects. The goal of student evaluation is not purely to evaluate and control them, or to mark them, but to find out what the student really gained in this course – what they learned. That is why we included the following in the evaluation of the courses: student self-assessment through ULCA assessment; practice portfolio based on Learn&Lead principles. At the end of the course, the student will write the plan of their journey of modern teacher development (project – written (word or picture) and oral presentation of the project in front of the class). We want to find out whether the student is oriented to the path of the team player/teacher. The evaluation aims not to evaluate the student realistically, but to find out where they have progressed to during the relevant semester. Each student who submits the assignment has completed it and achieves a score of 100%.

Since the Learn&Lead course lasts 2 years, we are interested in the development of each student who completes both years of the course during the final evaluation. Therefore, in the second year, as part of the completion of the course, each student creates vision of a modern teacher of the 21st century, envisioning themselves in 3 years' time. The SMART target involves a project – a written (word or picture) and oral presentation of the project in front of the class.

## Conclusion

The anthropologist Margaret Mead[18] said that "children must be taught how to think, not what to think". Although students are not children, the same adage applies to them. The notion of engaging students in learning and educating them to be critical thinkers requires a shift in pedagogy from the teacher being at the center of the classroom to the learner being at the center. In teacher-centered pedagogy, the focus is on the instructor and students work independently. The instructor controls the conversation and makes corrections to students' responses. The instructor also evaluates students' learning. In learner-centered pedagogy, the role of the teacher is more that of a coach than a person with all the answers. The focus is on both the instructor and students. Learning occurs through the process of interaction between the instructor and students and among the students. The future of learner-centered pedagogy lies in the ability of institutions to develop and foster learning communities and to harness the power of technology and innovation both within and outside of the classroom. The educational philosophies of yesteryear can no longer sustain the future teacher's education of future generations. Innovation

18 Margaret Mead, Anna Sieben, and Jürgen Straub, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (Penguin books Harmondsworth, UK, 1943).

breeds innovation; it is imperative that we shift our focus and broaden our acceptance that students have information at their fingertips, and to innovate how students learn so that they are better prepared for the future of education.

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# My reflections on the "Train the LCA Teacher-trainer" training

Jana Chynoradská

It´s Saturday, 29th October 2022, the day after the first ever training on "Train the LCA Teacher-trainer" within the "Upgrade yourself with learner-centred approach" KA2 project which we launched back in September 2020. It is the last learning/teaching/training activity we had planned to be and so it was.

We all met on Sunday 23rd October 2022 in the small town of Negotino where the Strashno Pindjur Primary school has its residence. Despite a few difficulties we all got together well and experienced a week full of professional training led by experienced teachers coming from Slovenia, Macedonia, Lithuania, and Slovakia. Every day was full of new original training courses led by the LCA teacher-trainers-to-be, feedback given by the participants (google forms), by LCA observers working along with the elaborated LCA observation sheet and two LCA expert – assessors, me being one of them and Gabriela Lojova, the author of the 7 principles of LCA that forms the base for this project idea. What was by far the most important component of this teacher-training process was the self-reflection of the LCA teacher-trainer-to-to after s/he had heard all the feedback.

The training cycle for two LCA teacher-trainers-to-be was as follows:

09,00 – 10,00 Learning experience from the previous day

10,00 – 10,15 Coffee break

10,15 – 11,00 Training session delivered by the 1st LCA teacher-trainer-to-be

11,05 – 11,50 Training session delivered by the 2nd LCA teacher-trainer-to-be

11,50 – 12,05 Coffee break

12,05 – 13,05 Group feedback session (1. LCA teacher-trainer-to-be, 2. observers, 3.participants)

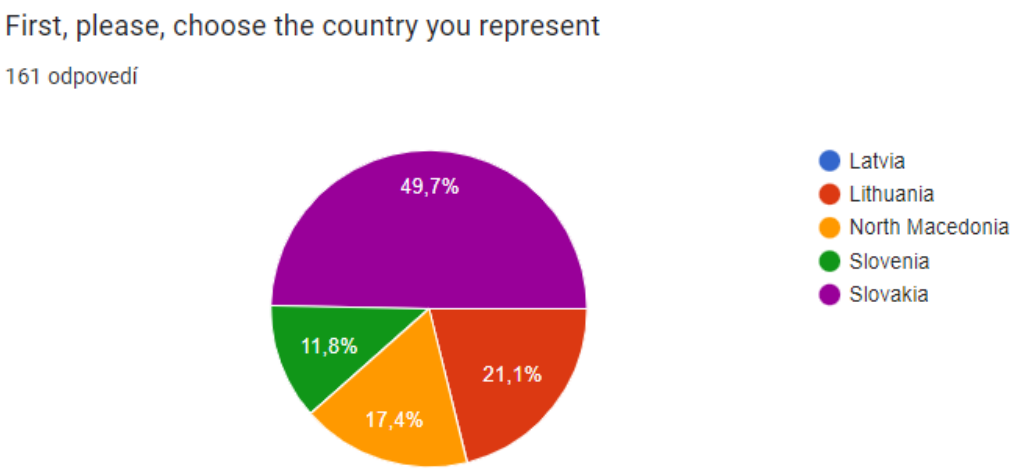
13,05 – 13,20 Individual feedback session: 1st LCA teacher-trainer-to-be with two LCA expert-assessors creating the Action plan for the 1st LCA teacher-trainer-to-be)

13,20 – 13,35 Individual feedback session: 2nd LCA teacher-trainer-to-be with two LCA expert-assessors creating the Action plan for the 2nd LCA teacher-trainer-to-be)

In the whole week there were 21 participants in person and 1 participant online. Out of these 12 got qualified as LCA teacher-trainer (one with recommendation after further developing their LCA teacher-training skills) and 2 were active as ULCA expert assessors.

If we take a closer look at the feedback provided by the participants, we can see that

1. 49,7% of the respondents came from Slovakia, 21,1% from Lithuania, 17,4% from North Macedonia and 11,8% from Slovenia.

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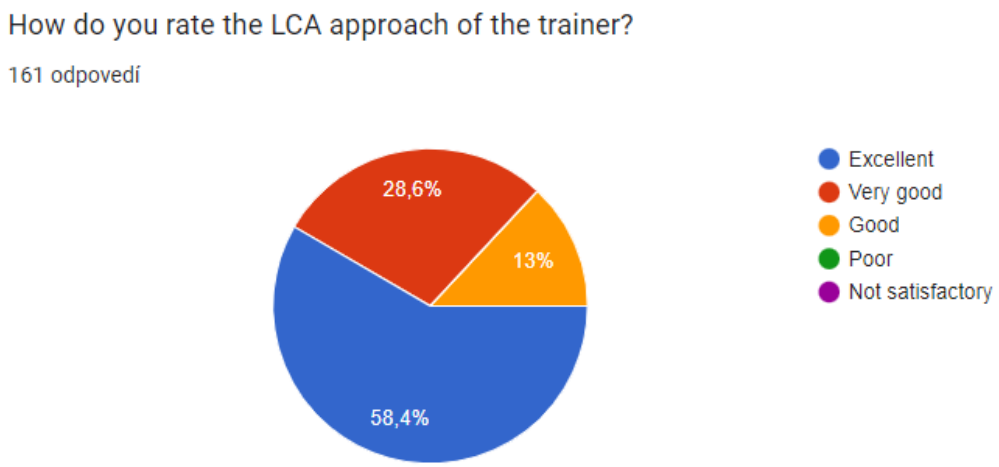
2. 58.4% of participants reported that the sessions delivered by the LCA teacher-trainers-to-be were excellent, 28.6% very good and 13% good.

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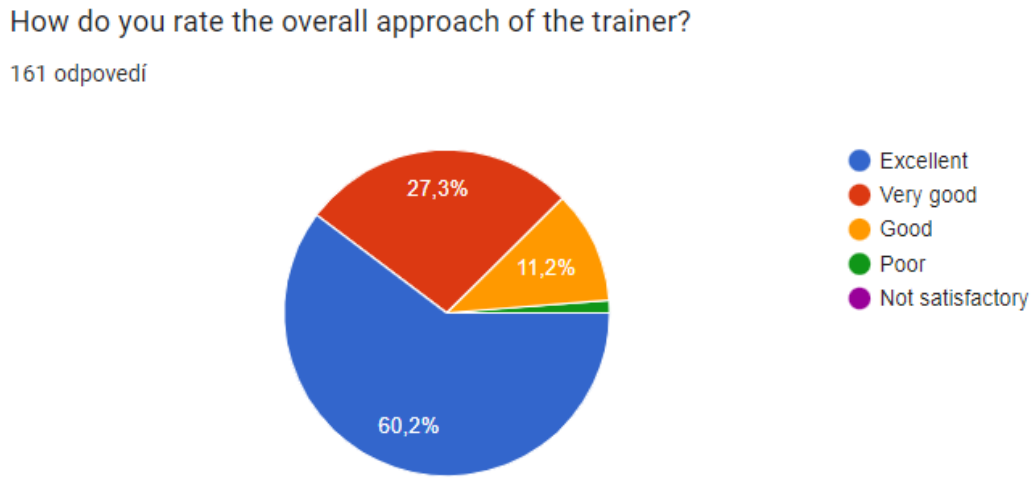
3. 60.2% of participants reported that the LCA teacher-trainers-to-be had an excellent overall approach, 27.3% very good, 11.2% good, and 1.2% poor.

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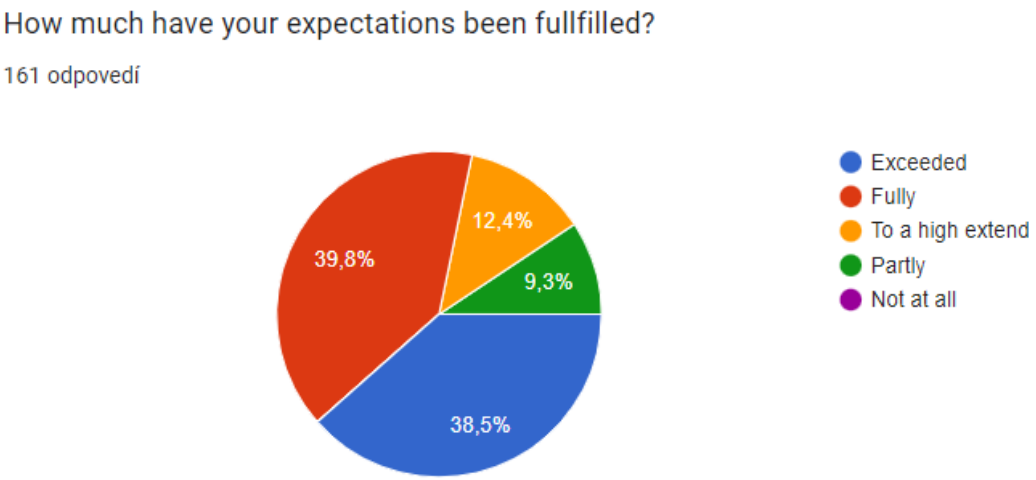
4. In terms of the participants' expectations, 38,5% were viewed as exceeded, 39,8% as fully met, 12,4% as met to a high extend and 9,3% as partly met.

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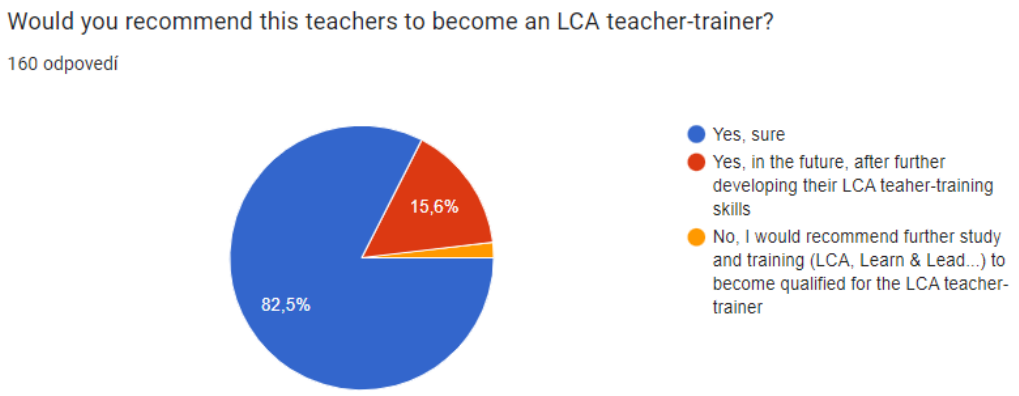
5. The most crucial feedback from the participants was about their recommendation of the LCA teacher-trainer-to-be to become an LCA teacher-trainer and here the feedback is that 82,5% as "yes, sure", 15,6% as "yes, in the future, after further developing their LCA teacher-training skills" and 1,9% as "no, I would recommend further study and training (LCA, Learn & Lead…) to become qualified for the LCA teacher-trainer.

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At all times, 2 LCA observers were viewing one LCA teacher-trainer-to-be, following the LCA observation sheet comprising the key areas of the successful implementation of the LCA approach in the classroom. Namely, these are as follows: 1. Active learning, learners' participation; 2. Learning content; 3. Balancing cognitive and affective domains; 4. Social climate and learning atmosphere; 5. Evaluation and feedback; and 6. Teacher performance. The LCA observation sheet has 6 main areas of observation, each of which then contains a more detailed description of expert teacher areas that helps the observers view the session through the lens of the LCA approach. To elaborate on just one of them, blow is a detailed description of first point – 1. Active learning, learners' participation (T = teacher; Ls = learners)

Usage of methods supporting active learning and discovery

- Variation in methods, tasks, techniques, and learning activities
- Variation in organization / Ls grouping, blended learning
- Flexibility in pacing and timing
- T delegates tasks to Ls whenever possible ( hand out papers, peer answer)
- T distributes turns evenly among all Ls
- Ls participate in decision-making (grouping, suggesting activities, topics...)
- Ls express their own opinions, ideas, values

On top of this, each description is then observed and assessed in scale from 0 (*not applied*), through 1 (*applied with difficulties*), through 2 (*applied sufficiently*) to 3 (*applied marvelously*).

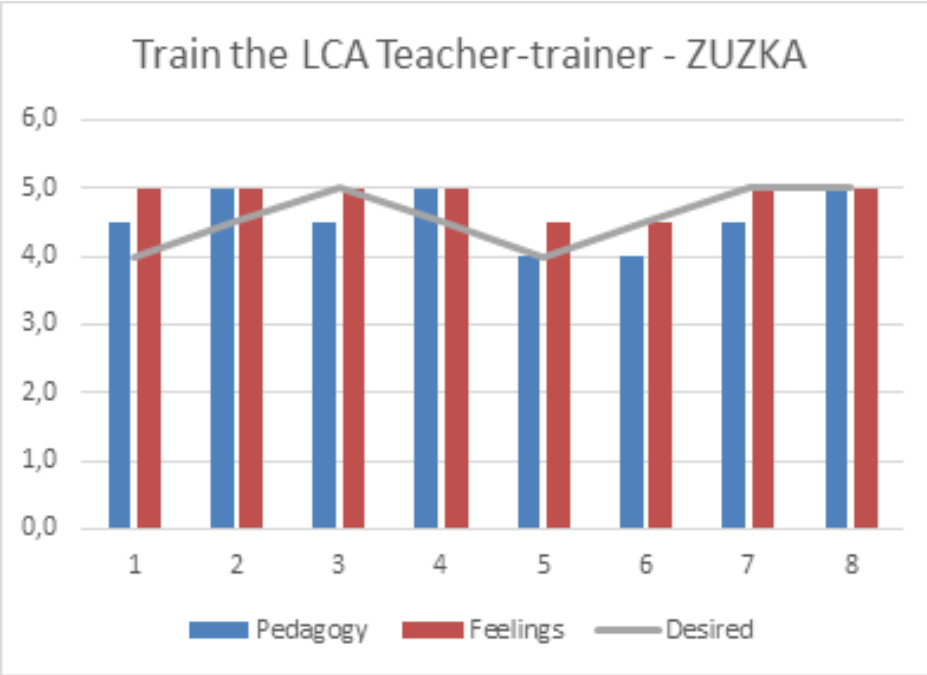
In terms of the feedback I gave to each LCA teacher-trainer-to-be, I used my own way of viewing, structuring, and measuring the trainer's performance in the classroom.

1. The first main table I call "Lesson analysis" and it consists of numbering the activities, measuring their start and end, grouping the Ls in the classroom, using "physical space", CLIL, creativity in the session and the notes sections. It is presented in the excel spread sheet.

2. The second table I offer is my own perception of the "pedagogical art performed by the teacher" and emotions present (here I do my best to feel the emotions of the group and mix them all together with mine). The maximum top is set to be 5 where there are a lot of positive vibes, smiles, deep learning happening in the classroom and 0 where the emotions seem to be frozen and all the people in the classroom seem to be in their own worlds.

3. The last measurement I do in the assessment is the time allocated to the activities in the session. This is simply a curve noting the numbers (being the minutes devoted to individual activities in the classroom fully corresponding to the previous two measurements) and offering various shaped and feedback to look at the time spent and evaluate its efficiency and effectivity.

Here I offer two different LCA teacher-trainers and my view of their work in the classroom in line with the LCA and Learn & Lead philosophy our ULCA teacher-training qualification is based upon.

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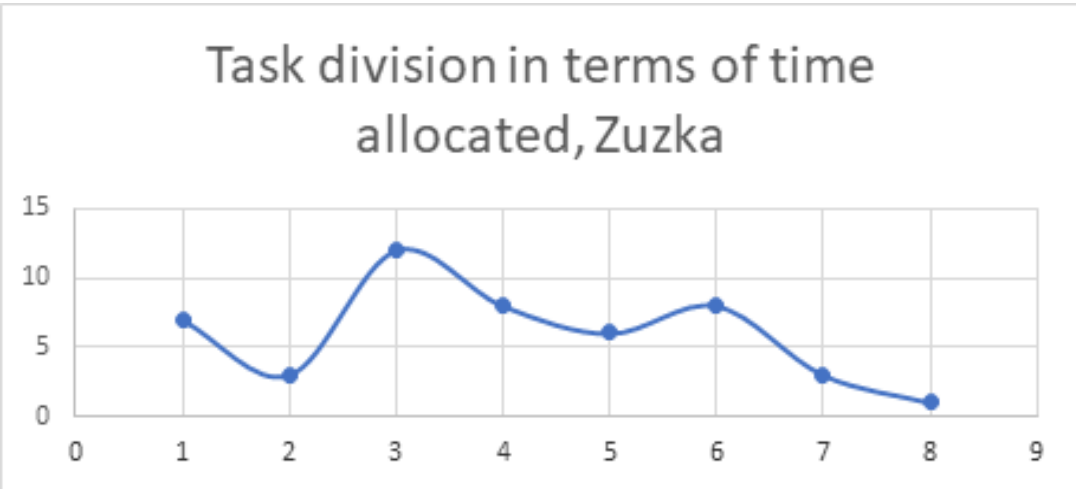


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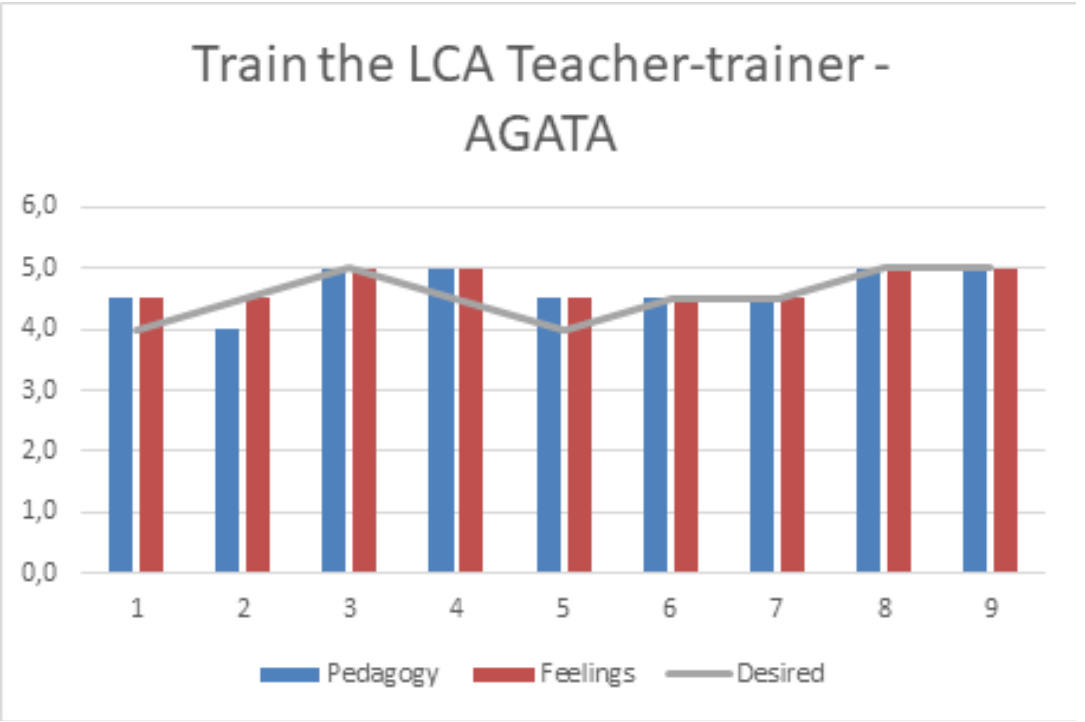


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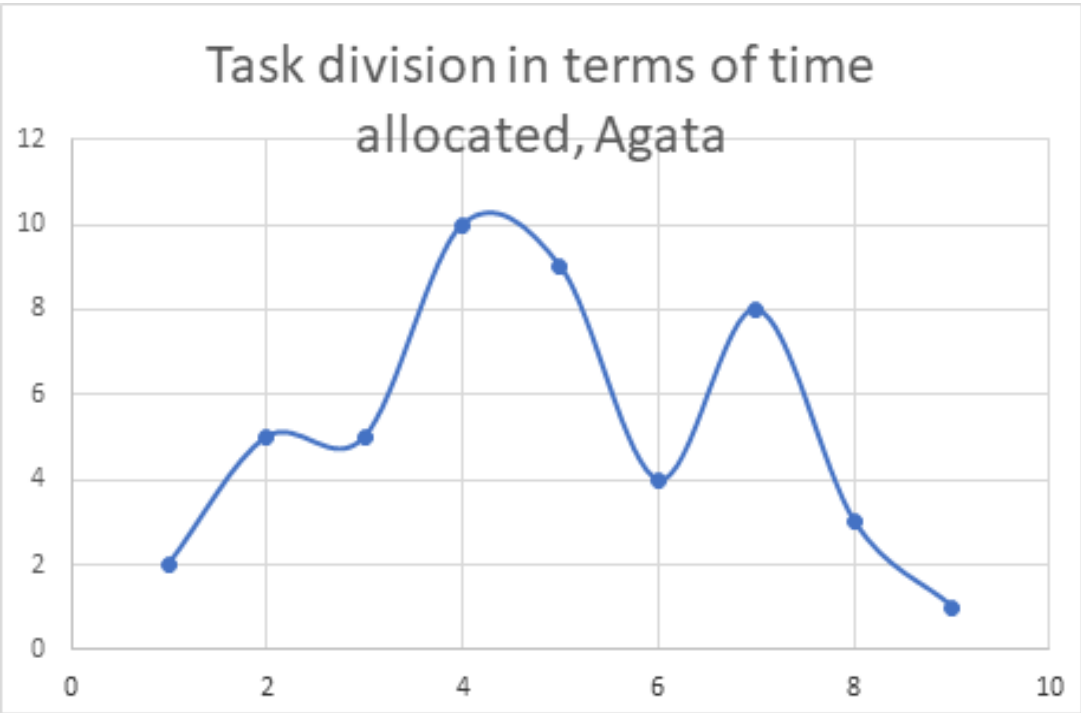


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Once we had gathered all the feedback for the LCA teacher-trainers-to be, we went through it together as a learning community and then, each LCA teacher-trainer-to-be met Gabi Lojova and me, the ULCA expert assessors, and we all agreed on the Action plan for the following 6 months.

Each Action plan consists of: what to do; which LCA TDF (Learner-centred approach Teacher Development Framework) this action relates to; how to do it; why to do it; who will be monitoring this action with the LCA teacher-trainer-to-be; and both by when and how it will be checked. After a thorough personal analysis with 12 LCA teacher-trainers I must admit the outcomes exceeded my expectations and I was more than happy to see what we all had created. There were at least 2 action plans outlined for each LCA teacher-trainer-to be, different ULCA professionals were chosen to monitor and support them in their actions, and we all have identified 28 action plans. To name just a few I highlight the following:

| What | LCA TDF | How | Why | To whom | By when | Check |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| present the objectives of the session: | Active learning | say it in 1-2sentences | they know what to expect and set their minds for the session | Jana, Gabi | 27th October 2022 | Pilot LCA teacher-training session in January 2023, get it recorded and sent to Jana |
| improve my English communication, become more accurate | Teacher´s roles, relations with learners | use English abroad (USA), | be more intelligible | Mateja | by April 2023 | online meeting - speech monitoring |
| verbalize ideas in more concise and clear way | Guiding one´s further development | self-monitoring of my speech in the classroom, feedback from my students - anonymously | be more effective in teaching | Daniel | by April 2023 | observation in a classroom, specifically focus on this area |
| develop my IT competences | Guiding one´s further development | attend online course for ULCA teachers, we can share our knowledge, UNI course in Vilnius, experimenting in my lessons - one tech bit a lesson | it´s important to be at the same level as our students, be and feel more self-confident | Maja | Feb-May 2023 | make a list of the apps with a short explanation, reflect how often I use it a week/ month |
| improve my language of instructions | Teacher´s roles, relations with learners | | to be better organized | Zuzka | February 2023 | Zuzka observes specifically my lesson and will update my ULCA Action plan no.1 |
| interconnectedness of the activities in the session | Learning content | connect my teaching real life experience with the LCA theory | get my SS to understand the connection between theory and practice/ applied LCA in the classroom | Jana | 10th November 2022 | Lesson plan and lesson delivery analysis of the lesson |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| advance my English communication skills | Teacher´s roles, relations with learners | take a course, do a lot of teacher-training in English, reading/listening/watching professional English | I want to be more self-confident in English | Jana/Gabi | monthly, 1st by 30th November 2022 | articles for the LLI NL |
| improve my English language skills | Teacher´s roles, relations with learners | attend English conversation classes, podcasts, diary... | to create better relationships with people, explore the world through English nowadays | Maťka | January 2023 | send Jana an email |
| Release stress/ Stress management | Resilience and stress management | attend a course of "Resilience" in LLI, reflect on the situations which I experienced as stressed and find out what caused it - can I learn from this? | it hurts me and I want to feel calm and think clearly | Katka/Jana | April 2023 | RQ test |

The following areas of development outlined in the LCA TDF were selected:

- Active learning, three actions
- Learning content, two actions
- Teacher´s roles, relations with learners , ten actions
- Communication and co-operation with colleagues and school management, two actions
- Guiding one´s further development , nine actions
- Resilience and stress management , two actions

As the LCA TDF is composed of two main parts, the Learner-centred and Learn & Lead, we can see that both of these were used in the LCA teacher-trainers-to-be action plans. To put it more precisely, these approaches can summed-up as follows:

- Learner-centred approach areas of development (15 actions)
- Active learning, three actions
- Learning content, two actions

Teacher´s roles, relations with learners , ten actions

- Learn & Lead areas of development (13 actions)

- Communication and co-operation with colleagues and school management, two actions
- Guiding one´s further development , nine actions
- Resilience and stress management , two actions

All in all, this week was a very special time spent with great friends, professionals and showed me the next course of action in my professional development. I am more than ready and willing to support, guide, and encourage great, learner-centred teachers to step out and become LCA teacher-trainers in the future. My journey is now enriched with a lot of warm-hearted, authentic, original experiences which will stay in my heart for the rest of my life.

With the LCA teacher-trainers-to-be, we all managed to set up the foundation for the following "Train the LCA teacher-trainer" training courses for the future. If you are interested in becoming an LCA teacher-trainer, be ready to apply for our training in the summer 2023. Places, dates, and program are to be announced before Christmas 2022.

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# Work-related Stress and Emotional Distress of Young In-Service Teachers in Kyrgyzstan

Ainuru Zholchieva, Aelita Zholchieva, Gulnara Musuralieva, Laula Zherebaeva

## Abstract

The study deals with occupational stress and burnout of young school teachers. Work-related stress and emotional distress among school teachers are considered a serious concern in the educational context everywhere. Stress can cause burnout syndrome, characterized by exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreasing personal accomplishments. Several studies identify that teaching is a highly stressful occupation, and most teachers experience it. Both burnout mechanisms and strategies prevent and manage it as an important factor in teachers‘ psychophysical health and overall fundamental quality of school service.

**Keywords:** stress, burnout, qualification, training, occupation, educational context.

## Introduction

The most significant and important factor in any educational system is the teacher and teacher-related activities at schools. The teacher creates the links between students‘ movement in the future, expanded knowledge, and stability. Therefore, we would like to understand a teacher as a critically important factor in the changing period of not only in schools, but also in our society. We will analyze the situation with teachers, especially young teachers‘ living being, concerns, work stress and their activities in Kyrgyzstan.

There are 82,000 teachers in Kyrgyzstan, two-thirds of them work in rural areas. About 85 percent of teachers are female. Almost half of the teachers are approaching or have reached retirement age (50 years and older), and may leave the system in the next decade (Shamatov, 2013).

On June 22, 2019, at an international conference in Bishkek, the Ministry of Education and Science announced that Kyrgyzstan had achieved the result which shows 73% of graduates from pedagogical institutes go to school to work, although earlier only about 40-50% of them worked in schools (www.akipress.org., 2019). But a UNESCO study in 2012 “General Basic Secondary Education by 2015” showed that only 14% of graduates from pedagogy faculties go to work in schools. In their study, the authors noted a serious shortage of teachers, and that many teachers should leave for retirement and be replaced by young teachers. Also, it was noted that in addition to low salaries, the shortage of teaching staff - these are meager social packages, poor conditions, and low prestige of the teaching profession (kg.akipress.org., 2012).

The low level of teacher salaries, which was below the national average remained a serious disincentive for recruiting high quality candidates into the profession. In recent years (in 2022), teachers‘ salaries have been increased but they are still comparatively low and many teachers have to take additional hours to earn more money. It is interesting what is the success of teachers in schools if they go to work in the hope of being realized as a professional because the decline in the quality of education since the independence of the country is a debated topic in civil society and government. Outdated curricula, lack of linkages between the labor market and the education system, low teacher salaries and high levels of plagiarism are cited as the causes of this phenomenon (Mambetaliev, 2011).

Secondary school teachers are one of the occupational groups presenting the highest levels of

sick leave due to stress in the workplace. This form of stress can cause burnout syndrome, which is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low levels of personal accomplishment (Carmona M. et. al., 2018).

## Literature Review

Work-related stress and emotional distress among young school teachers are considered serious concerns in the educational context of Kyrgyzstan.

What are the causes and effects of stress and burn out of young teachers in Kyrgyzstan?

To identify the answer to this question we analysed and reviewed some literature and resources. According to Vincenza Capone`s research (2019), the planning of development programs to reduce teachers' malaise, and improve their evaluation methods involves considering the buffering effect of efficacy beliefs, school climate, and organizational justice against burnout and depression.

Also, she points out that fairness in the distribution of incentives (material and moral) among colleagues also affects teacher job satisfaction and the teacher's status in the society, he/she has earned throughout his /her own career.

According to Dr. Singh's research (2015) when teachers are satisfied with their work, they can perform their responsibilities with more concentration and devotion. Job satisfaction in this context is the ability of the teaching to meet teachers' needs and improve their teaching performance (Singh, 2015)

Stemakova (2019) notes that the common coping strategy for teachers is substantial satisfaction, which refers to positive strategies, and teachers are more likely to use positive coping strategies than negative ones. She researched the influencing factors teachers' well-being and found that long-term stress decreases work satisfaction and can result in chronic exhaustion which can develop into burnout syndrome.

Low teacher salaries and teacher morale are an issue in the whole Central Asia region, and it is common for teachers to take on additional jobs to survive. In addition, corruption in education has become widespread. In recent years, teacher salaries have increased, but are still perceived as being quite low (OECD 2011b). Besides low salaries, factors leading to the shortage of teachers include meagre social security packages, poor conditions and the low prestige of the teaching profession (Open Kyrgyzstan 2010). The problem of finding certified teachers has worsened over the last five years and many schools have simply ceased teaching subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, music, English, Russian and Kyrgyz.

Bulatievich (2017) identified that the tendency for teachers to burn out is related to a low bias in the importance of their academic performance, a tendency to abandon activities in a situation of failure, emotional stress, inefficiency in the working environment, and dissatisfaction with career growth. We can note here the conclusion of a study by Capone (2019) which demonstrates that development programs planning aimed at reducing teacher malaise and improving teacher assessment methods should include the protecting effect from beliefs of inefficiency, school climate, and organizational fairness against burnout and depression. Famous researcher on burnout syndrome Christina Maslach (2019) pointed to the key aspect of burnout syndrome as increased feelings of emotional exhaustion as emotional resources are depleted; workers feel that they are no longer able to be satisfied by themselves at a psychological level. The circum-

stances between teachers' burnout and learners' achievements needs to be explored more fully within the teaching occupation to provide clues as to what causes burnout and what are its outcomes (Heidari S. et al. 2017).

Teaching is among the professsions that causes more stress compared to other professions (Hargreaves, 1999; Pithers, 1995). Stress effects both the teacher and the learners in the teaching process (Forlin, Douglas and Hattie,1996). Kyriacou (1987) who has carried out varies studies on teacher stress, defines teacher stress as the experiencing of unpleasant feelings such as depression, anger, worry, irritableness and tension which are formed as a result of working as a teacher. As it has been shown by several studies, teaching is a highly stressful occupation (Johnson et. al., 2005), and most teachers experience stress.

R. Quattrin (2010) proposes to provide a training course on occupational stress, burnout, and strategies for dealing with them in teacher education. This researcher found that knowledge of both burnout mechanisms and strategies to prevent and manage burnout is an important factor in the psychophysical health of teachers and a fundamental requirement of policies aimed at improving the overall quality of school services.

Young teachers‘ vulnerability depends on the school administration, particularly on the school director (or deputy), to assign teaching hours. The assignment is to be based on subject of specialization. However, the school administration is in a position to choose among qualified teachers and the teachers who are given preference will teach additional hours. The negotiation process and allocation criteria are in bigger detail. There is indeed a competition among teachers to get additional hours. Obviously, younger teachers lose in that race and their inability to gain additional income and the sense of inequality leaves them dissapointed and frustrated. The school administrators followed their preference for experienced teachers as they should be given preference for sure when hours from unfilled positions are distributed. The school director may justify his choice by interjecting as it was parents‘ or teachers‘ staff wish or decision. The older teachers may comment it as young teachers leave the profession anyway as soon as they find a better paid work. In fact, there is a large turnover of young teachers over the first few months of their employment.

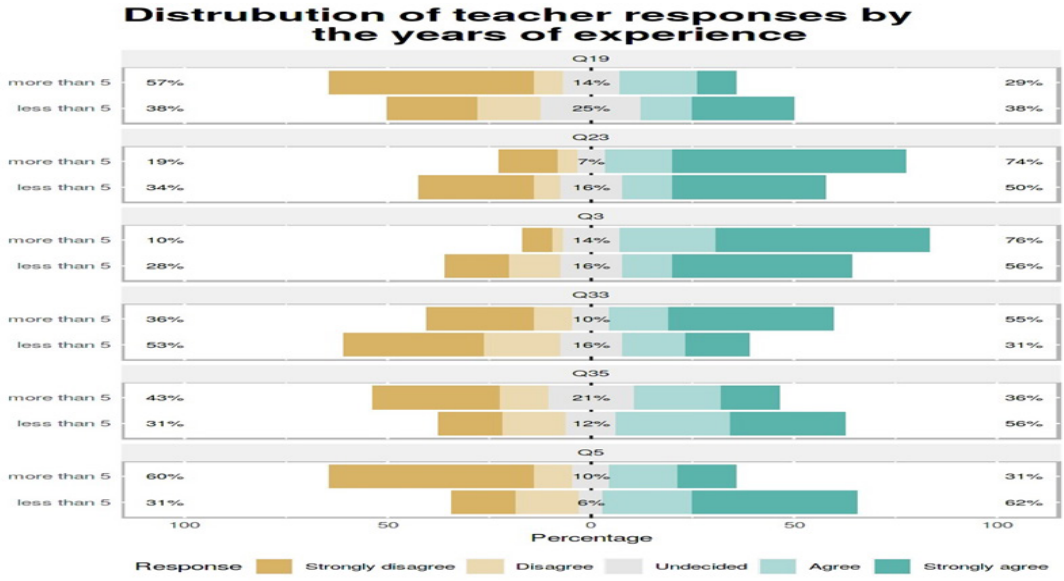
The question is, however, whether young teachers abandon the school, and possibly the profession, because they feel ill prepared to teach in front of a large class, are frustrated once they realize that other more experienced teachers earn much more due to having secured additional teaching hours, or embrace a better paid job opportunity outside the teaching profession. There is no doubt, however, that the anticipation of school administrators and older teachers that "young teachers will leave anyway" functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy which both reinforces the prejudice towards young teachers and justifies the inequitable redistribution of hours.

## Research Methodology

This is a mixed research way that used to get quantitative results and the 5-point Likert - type - scale to analyze the data. The purpose of using the mixed method was mainly to get more detailed information from respondents. A random sample was used to select the respondents. The questionnaire was sent to the schools. The respondents were first introduced with a consent to take part in the survey and then asked to complete the questionnaire. The full-time teachers of different subjects who have been teaching in the same schools for at least one full year at the time of the study were invited to participate in the survey. More than 85 young teachers sent their email addresses to get the questionnaire.  From this population of teachers, the study has

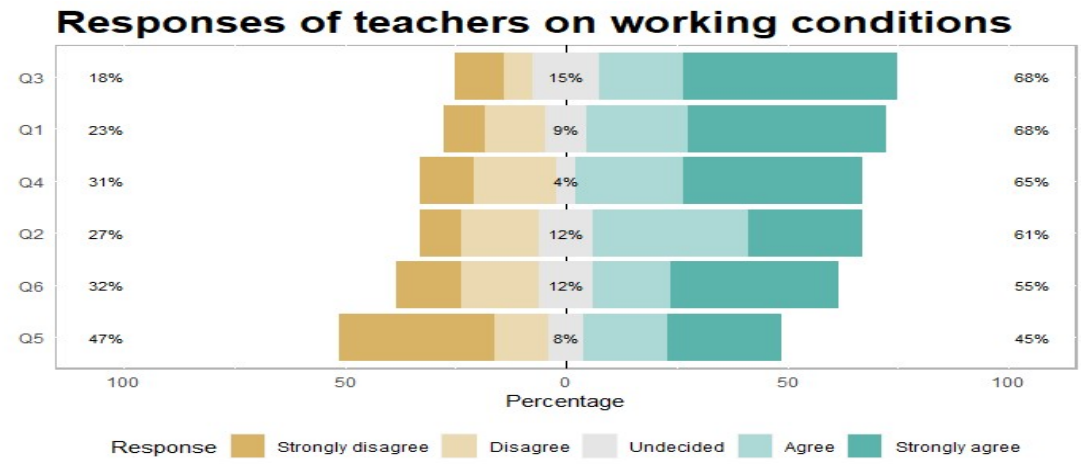
collected data from 75 volunteer young teachers.

**Table 1.**




Humiliating salaries, low social status, lack of career opportunities, colossal workloads that undermine physical and mental health, and consumer wages for teachers, in our opinion, have lowered the prestige of the teaching profession in the eyes of future teachers. The Education Development Strategy of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic (2012) considers the motivation and encouragement of young teachers who systematically improve students` achievement as one of the priority areas. At the same time, the young teacher community in Kyrgyzstan sees a problem in the government's position regarding the effectiveness of teachers' work; they accuse teachers of the low quality of education, even if they do not claim, then by their attitude, they show their position which almost says that the level of efficiency and effectiveness of teachers does not require a constant request for higher wages, encouragement, and improvement of working conditions. For their part, young teachers (unofficially) argue that the specified wage structure, benefits, and working conditions do not satisfy their basic needs, since in other sectors of the economy the wage structure is higher, and motivation and working conditions are higher. It is most likely that public school teachers cannot provide quality education when there is a gap between the Government and teachers. Having studied all sorts of work-related stress and burnout factors that affect the attitude of young teachers to their work, it is possible to see it in the histogram below.

**Table 2.**




Having studied all sorts of work related stress and burnout factors that affect the attitude of young teachers to their work, it is possible to make conclusions.

## Conclusion

The study offers insights for school administrators, experienced teachers and education authorities at district, provincial and national levels. It points out the importance of assisting beginning teachers in improving performance, retention and long-term personal and professional well-being. The young teachers try not to pay attention to the salary size at school but try to improve their professional skills and especially these teachers work in other places part-timely. Young teachers still do not feel satisfied with the relationship with their colleagues, they are only adapting in new places. Through the descriptive survey study of young teachers‘ work related stress, emotional distress, and job satisfaction, it explored the issues within the framework of the socio-economic obstacles to young teachers' professional socialization and adaptation in the context of the Kyrgyz Republic.

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# Comprehensive rehabilitation as a learner-centred programme and approach

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## Abstract

The study looks at the possibilities for rehabilitation of pupils. The aim of the research are: to find out the occurrence of the most common physical, sensory and health impairments of pupils with intellectual disabilities; to analyze the possibilities of using rehabilitation for these pupils; to find out the impact of rehabilitation on these pupils and on their health condition; and to evaluate the employment of these pupils after the end of their education. On the basis of the analysis of the results of the survey and by comparing the information from the schools, we form recommendations that can contribute to the improvement of the rehabilitation process. To achieve the objectives of the exploratory investigation, the quantitative method was used, using basic statistical investigation and a questionnaire of our own design.

**Keywords:** Comprehensive rehabilitation. Intellectual disability. Sensory impairment. Medical impairment. Physical impairment.

## Introduction and theoretical background

Pedagogical practice confirms that individuals with intellectual disabilities can be positively influenced by special education under certain conditions; we consider them to be educable and trainable. Only the most severe cases constitute an exception; however, this represents only a fraction of this population. A significant proportion of the mentally handicapped exhibit social application due to the knowledge, skills and habits acquired. For some, only part of their educational content is acquired, and some cannot even apply it, but this has a certain justification for themselves, their formation, and development – or at least for the maintenance of their condition. Thus, we can conclude that any educational intervention which positively affects a mentally handicapped person, even if only partially, is also relevant and necessary.[1] The WHO describes rehabilitation as the combined and coordinated use of medical, social, educational and occupational resources to ensure the highest possible degree of functional ability. Its main aim in the educational setting of schools is to minimize the effects of disability. Comprehensive or holistic rehabilitation consists of four basic components: medical, social, occupational and educational rehabilitation. Their interconnection must be mutually coordinated. Comprehensive rehabilitation in special schools is a team effort of special educators, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, psychologists, etc. Its effectiveness is influenced by many factors. In our research, selected factors of rehabilitation are observed, statistically processed, and confronted with pedagogical practice and the results were compiled into recommendations.[2]

Survey problem and objective, characteristics of the survey population and survey methodology

Considering the topicality of compensatory rehabilitation and the complexity of the impact on

1 Comp. JANKOVSKÝ, J.: *Ucelená rehabilitace děti s tělesným a kombinovaným postižením.* 2. vyd. Praha: Triton, 2006. 176 s.

2 Comp. STUPÁK, B.: *Komprehenzívna rehabilitácia osôb so zdravotným znevýhodnením* In: *Studia Scientifica Facultatis Paedagogicae.* Ružomberok: Verbum, Roč. 21, č. 3 (2022), s. 77-83

pupils with physical, sensory and health impairments in pupils with mental disabilities – and in an effort to obtain a realistic and objective view of the issue – we present and work with data obtained from special primary schools in the Eastern Slovakia region. The data were mainly collected using quantitative methods – the questionnaire method as well as the interview method, with representatives of schools during 2022. The survey set consists of 45 special primary schools in the region of Eastern Slovakia; 21 special primary schools are from the Košice region, and 24 schools from the Prešov region. The survey analyses the possibilities of using pupils' rehabilitation and the employment of pupils with intellectual disabilities after finishing education in a special primary school. In the survey, we also focused on the impact of rehabilitation on these pupils and their health condition.

The survey was quantitatively oriented, and was carried out by a questionnaire method of its own construction along with interviews with principals or representatives (special educators) in special primary schools. Quantitative research allowed us to reach a large number of respondents, which made it possible to obtain a large research population. We found the questionnaire to be a very effective research tool, as it provided us with a large amount of information in a relatively short time. At the end of the questionnaire, there was space to react and express comments, ideas or suggestions to improve the situation in the field. In addition to physical visits to the schools, the questionnaire was administered electronically (in the form of a link to the created online questionnaire, supporting the anonymity of the respondents and the return rate of the questionnaires). The processing of the individual data was carried out by analysis as well as by tabular and graphical representation. The individual survey data were subjected to basic statistical analysis using MS Office Excel. The main objectives of the survey were:

- to find out how rehabilitation can be used for these pupils and what impact rehabilitation has on these pupils and their health;
- to find out how pupils with intellectual disabilities (applied rehabilitation) can be employed after completing their education in a special primary school.

Subsequent exploratory tasks emerged from the stated objectives:

- conducting a survey in the form of a questionnaire and guided interviews with special educators in special primary schools;
- comparison of survey results;
- evaluation of the survey data with an aspect on the importance of the use of rehabilitation and the impact on the health status of pupils,
- evaluation of the employment of pupils with intellectual disabilities after completing education (with rehabilitation methods) in special primary school.

The survey focuses on: the occurrence of the most common physical, sensory and health impairments among pupils with intellectual disabilities; the number of these pupils; what kind of rehabilitation is provided in these schools; and how many schools allow pupils to continue their education after the end of primary education to prepare them for life in the society or employment. We present selected questions and results from the survey. The object of the survey was to establish facts such as:

- finding out the current number of pupils in each special primary school;

- finding out the possibilities of individual special schools, whether the pupils can continue their education to prepare them for life in society or employment after completing primary education;
- to find out the current status of impairments that are most common among pupils with intellectual disabilities;
- identifying the status of pupils with intellectual disabilities with specific sensory impairments;
- ascertaining the status of pupils with an intellectual disability with a specific impairment;
- identifying the condition of pupils with intellectual disabilities with specific physical impairments;
- identifying rehabilitation options for pupils with intellectual disabilities in schools;
- identifying the interest in and use of rehabilitation by pupils with intellectual disabilities;
- determining whether pupils with intellectual disabilities experience a change and improvement in their health status following rehabilitation;
- identifying options for inclusion and education of pupils with disabilities;
- identifying the provision of special education counselling services in schools;
- identifying the possibilities of setting up and providing relaxation spaces - multi-sensory snoezelen rooms for pupils with disabilities;
- identifying the possibilities and interest of pupils with disabilities in leisure activities;
- finding out whether school leavers are able to apply the skills they have acquired at school and in the labour market,
- finding out the possibilities and cooperation of the pupils' parents with the school in taking care of the child's physical and mental health for their progress.

Our assumption was that the majority of pupils with intellectual disabilities benefit from compensatory rehabilitation, which has a comprehensive and positive impact on their health. Also, that most special primary schools have special education counselling centres, whose services improve the quality of education of pupils with intellectual disabilities.

## Processing and interpretation of survey results

As part of the processing and interpretation of the results of the research on compensatory rehabilitation of pupils with intellectual disabilities in the educational process in special primary schools, we present partial results.

Number of pupils attending selected schools - Eastern Slovakia region

In 2022, when the survey was carried out, 45 special primary schools in the Eastern Slovakia region were attended by a total of 4827 pupils, including 2426 pupils in the Prešov region and 2401 pupils in the Košice region.

**Table 1**. Number of pupils attending special primary schools *(Source: own processing)*

| | Together | Prešov | Košice |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Number of pupils** | 4,827 | 2,426 | 2,401 |
| **Number of schools** | 45 | 24 | 21 |

Number of pupils attending selected special primary schools - eastern Slovakia region, by educational variant

Pupils with intellectual disabilities are educated in special primary schools in three variants. In the application and selection of rehabilitation techniques, the degree of disability is a significant factor that influences not only their choice. The largest number of pupils (3,232 – 67%) attend variant A, followed by variant B (1,182 – 24.5%) and variant C (413 – 8.6%).

**Table 2.** Number of pupils with intellectual disabilities by variant *(Source: own processing)*

| | | No. of pupils | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Var. A** | pupils with mild intellectual disabilities | 3,232 | 67.0 |
| **Var. B** | pupils with a moderate degree of intellectual disability | 1,182 | 24.5 |
| **Var. C** | pupils with severe or profound intellectual disabilities or for pupils with intellectual disabilities who also have other disabilities, are holders of a disability card and cannot be educated under Option A or B | 413 | 8.6 |

Opportunities for further education after primary education

When asked whether there is a possibility for pupils to continue their education after completing primary education in order to prepare for life in society or employment, most (21 – 46.7%) schools answered that pupils in their school can continue their education after completing primary education at a practical school and at the same time at a vocational training school. In 14 (31.1%) schools, these pupils are allowed to continue their education only at a practical school, and in 10 (22.2%) schools pupils do not have the option of further lower secondary education. For pupils with intellectual disabilities, continuing their education beyond primary education is very important for their integration into life and society, increasing the chances of eventual employment.

**Table 3**. Opportunities to continue education *(Source: own processing)*

| Lower secondary education for pupils with intellectual disabilities | | Number of schools | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| **YES** | Practical school | 14 | 31.1 |
| | Secondary vocational school | 0 | 0,0 |
| | Practical school and SVS | 21 | 46.7 |
| **NO** | | 10 | 22.2 |

*Impairments in pupils with intellectual disabilities*

A student with a disability can be characterized as a person who has a long-standing physical, psychological, intellectual or sensory impairment interacting with a variety of barriers that may make it difficult to participate fully and effectively in school and society on an equal basis with others. In a survey, when asked to outline the most common impairments for students with intellectual disabilities at their school, most (20 – 44.4%) schools reported that sensory and physical impairments were the most common. At 12 (26.7%) schools, physical and health impairments were the most common, and sensory and health impairments were prevalent at 9 (20.0%) schools. Pupils with sensory, physical and health impairments were the most prevalent group in 4 (8.9%) of these schools.

**Table 4.** Impairments in pupils with intellectual disabilities *(Source: own processing)*

| The most common pupil impairments | Number of schools | % |
|---|---|---|
| With sensory and physical impairment | 20 | 44.4 |
| With physical and health impairments | 12 | 26.7 |
| With sensory and health impairment | 9 | 20.0 |
| With sensory, physical and health impairments | 4 | 8.9 |

*Comprehensive rehabilitation options for pupils in the school environment*

When asked what kind of rehabilitation is available to pupils with intellectual disabilities at the special school where they are educated, 23 (51.1%) schools, i.e., more than half, mentioned all rehabilitation: educational, medical, social and occupational. This was followed by 19 (42.2%) schools which provide educational and social rehabilitation. Educational and occupational rehabilitation was reported by 2 (4.4%) schools. A combination of educational, medical and social rehabilitation is provided by 1 (2.2%) school. The data show that vocational rehabilitation is the least represented, but this factor is essential for the socialization and integration of these pupils into everyday life and also their employment on the labor market.

**Table 5.** Comprehensive rehabilitation options for special primary schools *(Source: own processing)*

| Rehabilitations | Number of schools | % |
|---|---|---|
| Educational and social | 19 | 42.2 |
| Educational, therapeutic, social and occupational | 23 | 51.1 |
| Educational, therapeutic and social | 1 | 2.2 |
| Educational and working | 2 | 4.4 |

*Interest in the use and attractiveness of rehabilitation for pupils in the school environment*

Providing rehabilitation for pupils with intellectual disabilities also requires the attractiveness of the process itself to ensure the interest of the pupils, which directly contributes to the effectiveness of the pedagogical process. In this question, which was aimed at finding out what kind of rehabilitation is used by pupils with intellectual disabilities in special schools, 15 (33.3%) schools reported educational and social rehabilitation. Subsequently, 13 (28.9%) schools reported all rehabilitation – namely educational, medical, social and occupational. In 8 (17.8%) schools, the most common rehabilitation used by pupils was educational, medical and social rehabilitation. In other schools, educational, social and occupational rehabilitation and solely educational rehabilitation were most common, in roughly equal numbers (3 – 6.7%; and 4 – 8.9%, respectively). Only 2 (4.4%) schools saw the use of educational and occupational rehabilitation dominate.

**Table 6**. The rehabilitation most used by pupils *(Source: own processing)*

| Rehabilitations | Number of schools | % |
|---|---|---|
| Educational | 4 | 8.9 |
| Educational and social | 15 | 33.3 |
| Educational, social and occupational | 3 | 6.7 |
| Educational, therapeutic, social and occupational | 13 | 28.9 |

*Applying the skills acquired in schools by pupils with intellectual disabilities in the labour market*

Work skills, habits and knowledge are among the decisive factors in finding a job in the labor market. For people with intellectual disabilities in manual work, a good mastery of skills is a determinant of their employability, which affects their future life and development. For this item, as many as 23 (51.1%) schools reported that they could not assess whether the pupils attending their school were able to apply the skills they had acquired in school and in the labor market. From 16 (35.6%) schools, the answer was that their pupils are able to apply the skills they have acquired in school and in the labor market. In 6 (13.3%) of the schools, the pupils are unable to apply the acquired skills in school and in the labor market according to the responses received.

**Table 7.** Applying the skills acquired at school in the labour market *(Source: own processing)*

| | Number of schools | % |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 16 | 35.6 |
| No | 6 | 13.3 |
| I can't judge | 23 | 51.1 |

*Collaboration of parents with the school in the educational process supporting the development of physical and mental health as well as its further progress*

The influence of the family on education is indisputable. A child with a disability develops and learns about themselves and forms their self-esteem according to how they succeed or fail in activities and how they are supported, seen and evaluated by other people, especially their immediate family. Adequate self-image and self-esteem are fostered by an education that combines a positive emotional relationship with the child with management without extremes. Schools should therefore create sufficient space and make use of available organizational forms that give parents the opportunity to interact with their child in the school environment. By studying the collaboration between schools and parents, we found that as many as 33.3% of schools cannot assess whether parents cooperate with the school in caring for the child's physical and mental health for their progress. Furthermore, 18 (40%) schools responded positively that parents cooperate with the school, and 12 (26.7%) schools responded negatively.

**Table 8.** Cooperation of parents with the school in educational activities *(Source: own processing)*

| | Number of schools | % |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 18 | 40.0 |
| No | 12 | 26.7 |
| I can't judge | 15 | 33.3 |

## Discussion

This survey was conducted in 2022 to determine the prevalence of the most common physical, sensory and health impairments among pupils with intellectual disabilities in special primary schools in the Eastern Slovakia region. Based on the results of the survey, we can conclude that the majority of pupils with intellectual disabilities are without physical impairments, and if physical impairments are already present in children with intellectual disabilities, they are most often physical and sensory impairments at the same time – especially visual impairments. This fact also determines what types of rehabilitation pupils with intellectual disabilities can benefit from in special primary schools, and consequently what impact rehabilitation has on these pupils and their health. The results of the survey show that most of the schools surveyed allow all forms of rehabilitation – namely educational, therapeutic, social and occupational – but the form of rehabilitation most used by pupils in these schools is educational and social rehabili-

tation, and the least used is occupational rehabilitation, which prepares and enables the child's integration into society and employment. The survey also shows that vocational rehabilitation is also the least represented. More than half of the schools confirmed to us that they observe a significant improvement in pupils' health after receiving rehabilitation, but some schools are unable to assess this. We believe this is also because they do not provide medical rehabilitation services within the school. Another finding from the survey is that less than half of the schools surveyed have established relaxation facilities – a multi-sensory room with a snoezelen environment for relaxation purposes. The snoezelen environment provides the most suitable place for numerous weight-bearing and therapeutic activities, thus creating a sense of well-being and security, which is particularly important for pupils with intellectual disabilities and in combination with other disabilities. We therefore believe that it is imperative that every special primary school should have these relaxation areas, even if they are financially demanding.

Another of the aims of our research was to find out and evaluate the possibilities of employment of pupils with mental disabilities after finishing their education in special primary schools, and what conditions pupils have for further lower secondary education after finishing their primary education in these schools. Based on the results of the questionnaire survey, we can conclude that up to two-thirds of the surveyed schools provide pupils with the possibility to continue their education at a practical school, while only a smaller part offers the possibility of further education at a vocational school. In special education practice in schools, the fact that only 40% of schools have established special education counselling centers is important.

Based on the results of the survey we propose recommendations for practice:

- build a snozelen environment in every school, as it induces a feeling of well-being and security which is especially important for pupils with intellectual disabilities;
- devote more attention to vocational rehabilitation, as it prepares and enables the child's integration into society and employment;
- create the conditions and enable pupils to continue lower secondary education after completing primary education directly in these schools;
- know all of the specificities and weaknesses of pupils with intellectual disabilities so that we can positively influence their mental and physical development;
- apply an individual approach and thus create appropriate conditions for the education of these pupils, respecting their personalities;
- provide comprehensive rehabilitation for pupils within the school;
- establish special education counselling centers in schools;
- organize talks for the parents of these children to help them overcome the problems and barriers they are experiencing;
- create more sheltered workshops and sheltered workplaces;
- support cooperation between parents and schools.

## Conclusion

The formation of a well-rounded and harmoniously developed personality for mentally handicapped children and youth is not limited to the educational action of the school in the classroom, but also takes place in the family. Therefore, the cooperation of parents with the school in the implementation of comprehensive rehabilitation is essential. Comprehensive rehabilitation of individuals with physical disabilities, the sick and disabled, the sensory impaired and the mentally handicapped requires the assistance of several professionals. This assistance is based on the concept of comprehensive rehabilitation, which consists of components of medical, social, occupational and educational rehabilitation, as well as a multidisciplinary work team with the participation of medical, nursing, social and special education intervention. The aim of comprehensive rehabilitation for pupils with intellectual disabilities is to achieve the highest possible degree of the most versatile development of their personality. Due to the specifics of the educational process, their possibilities are taken into account, which are determined by the nature and severity of the disability, resulting in the widest and most successful work and social application. This survey was conducted to determine the current status and occurrence of the most common physical, sensory and medical impairments of pupils with intellectual disabilities in selected special schools in Eastern Slovakia. We also investigated the possibilities of using rehabilitation for these pupils in these special primary schools and the impact of rehabilitation on these pupils and their health status. We were interested in the possibilities of pupils with intellectual disabilities after the completion of primary education to continue their education and training for preparation for life in society or employment.

The findings confirmed a spectrum of impairments among pupils with intellectual disabilities, with sensory and physical impairments being the most prevalent. The results of the survey in the selected schools correspond with the statistics of the Centre for Scientific and Technical Information of the Slovak Republic and the Statistical Yearbook of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic for the school year 2021–2022. An important finding is that in only half of the surveyed schools can pupils continue their lower secondary education, namely at a practical school and also at a vocational school. By comparing the survey results with the literature analysis and synthesis of the findings, it can be concluded that compensatory rehabilitation is justified for pupils with intellectual disabilities, as it has a positive impact on their health status. The application of rehabilitation leads to physical and mental development of the personality, or at least to the maintenance of the condition. It is for this reason that we consider the provision of comprehensive rehabilitation for individuals with intellectual disabilities essential, along with the use of relaxation spaces that positively affect individuals with intellectual disabilities.

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# Preventive incentive programme for the development of motor competences with a focus on the pupil

Bohuslav Stupák

## Abstract

This study examines the possibilities of a preventive, short-term stimulation program for children and pupils focusing on the area of motor competences. The aim of the study is to present the implementation and possibilities of using the designed program for the development of the coordination and balance movement competences of children and pupils. The paper analyzes the regularities of children's motor development and the possibilities of qualitative change using a stimulating program focusing on the individual. On the basis of the analysis of the findings of the research investigation, and by comparing information from schools, we form recommendations that can contribute to the improvement of the pedagogical process.

**Key words:** Movement Competence. MOBAK-KG. Preventive stimulation program.

## Theoretical background: Stimulation program for older preschool children

Each developmental period – from a person's birth to their old age – is unique, and has its own irreplaceable value. It is very important that this is made the most of for the comprehensive development of the personality. Knowledge of the laws of motor development of children not only allows caregivers to properly guide and develop motor prerequisites in the process of physical and sports education, but also helps them to significantly influence the intellectual, psychological and social development of children's personality structures via the provision of adequate physical activities. The basic relationships of qualitative change are already formed in the early stages of life. The level of motor changes is often used to assess the maturation and overall development of a person. If we do not devote sufficient attention to the development of motor skills and abilities, the child will not fully reach and approach the threshold of attaining motor competence. By analogy, we could look at the various skills, knowledge, abilities, aptitudes, habits and attitudes, the basis of which are acquired in the pre-school period and which are then used not only in childhood but also in adulthood.

In the developmental period of the older preschool age, we prepare a stimulating program mainly in the form of a set of activities, games and exercises. Each activity, game or exercise focuses on the development of a particular psychological function – for example, visuomotor, graphomotor, perceptual skills, speech, language and communication development or mathematical skills. In kindergartens, there are also children from low-income backgrounds, including children from marginalized Roma communities. The chances of these children succeeding in their personal development – not only in childhood, but also in adulthood – are increased by the possibility of early, high-quality and systematic pre-primary education. This also increases their chances of school success. It is these children who often fall into the category of children with uneven development. We can conclude that kindergartens do not only serve to prepare children and transition them to primary school, but at the same time provide education and training for life. Pre-primary education of children in kindergarten in the sense of preparation for school is only one part of this. In terms of preparation for school, this is a propaedeutic

method of providing physical, reading, writing, mathematical, scientific, aesthetic and other literacy skills. In fact, kindergarten has a much broader scope for the development of the child's personality as well as for children with uneven development. A child in this period in the educational area of health and movement acquires a number of valuable habits, skills, knowledge, abilities and attitudes which they apply throughout the rest of their life. Targeted support for physical education activities and guidance to develop children's positive attitudes towards physical culture is an important part of the general culture and the whole social system. This is one of the specific spheres of multifaceted human activity in which people interact with the social and natural environment and through which they significantly contribute to the formation of the biological and social aspects of personality and to the deepening of interpersonal relations. Physical education activities have an effect on the consolidation of health, on the increase of physical performance and physical fitness, on the formation and improvement of physical development, as well as on the mental, moral and overall development of the personalities of children. Physical education and sport have many positive aspects: they contribute to the development of physical fitness, have an important role in self-knowledge, in the education of tolerance and a sense of fair-play, and in the cultivation of psychological resilience in the face of adversity. Movement brings the pleasure of releasing energy and creating pleasant fatigue. It helps in the formation of a healthy personality capable of working and creating social values – a personality that can financially provide for one's own needs and those of one's family.

## Incentive programme for the development of basic motor competences

Sports activities provide children with basic theoretical and practical physical education. They help to remedy the deficiencies of the handicapped and children who have not been given sufficient attention. They fulfil an important compensatory and motivational function. They form a positive, active relationship between children and physical activity, physical education and sport. They make an important contribution to the intellectual, psychological, social and moral development of the personality. They contribute to economic and political orientation by applying Olympic ideas. They participate in the identification of talented athletes, guide their orientation, strengthen sporting interests and ambitions. Regular physical activity is associated with both immediate and long-term benefits and means: children's psychological well-being; reduced mental tension; increased ability to concentrate; better weight control and lower likelihood of becoming overweight; improved cardiovascular function; more oxygen to reaching the brain, thus improving the ability to think; improved memory; improved respiratory function; lower blood pressure; healthy human lifestyle; reinforcing a lasting habit of regular exercise; strengthened immunity; happiness and good mental development, which is directly related to the rejection of socio-pathological phenomena; the formation of positive will and personality traits that protect against negative phenomena; the improvement of motor skills and habits; increased physical fitness; satisfying sporting and physical education interests and needs; providing appropriate cultural leisure activities; developing activity, independence and creativity; forming habits of rational use of time outside the classroom for relaxation and regeneration of mental and physical strength; and no negative side-effects. Prolonged sitting of children results in motor poverty, imbalance of muscle groups and, in the future, a wide range of painful conditions – from spinal deformities to damage to intervertebral discs. With such disorders in children, it is necessary to avoid one-sided sports and move, in the form of play. Impaired health has an economic impact on the indi-

vidual (and society) and can cause a reduction in quality of life, financial security or loss of employment. Health impairment also affects family life, child rearing and economic security. The main goal of the Health and Movement educational area of the State Educational Program for pre-primary education in kindergartens is to provide basic information related to health – and at the same time, through appropriate physical exercises, to lead the child to the acquisition and improvement of movement abilities and skills, as well as to increase the level of physical readiness and physical education competences of children. We understand competence as the ability to instill skills, attitudes and knowledge into effective action occurring in many real-life situations and contexts. Basic motor competencies can be described as dispositions of functional performance, also as dispositions of motor performance that can be developed from situation-specific requirements, and that can serve as a strategy for meeting requirements in a culture of sport and exercise. The level and possibilities of their future development predetermine children's subsequent involvement in physical and sporting activities and are important for the implementation of subsequent physical activity with regard to the promotion and development of health and the management of a healthy lifestyle. They also represent the basic requirements for children's participation in active sport and exercise and for the later development of an active lifestyle.

The main goal of the incentive program is the development of basic motor competences. Teachers in kindergartens have in the spectrum of their tasks to ensure the effective development of children's motor competences. One of the prerequisites for fulfilling this task is appropriate diagnostics. To verify the effectiveness of the stimulation program, it is appropriate to use the detection of the basic motor competencies of kindergarten children with the test battery MOBAK KG (Motorische Basiskompetenzenin der Kindergarten). This was published as a test instrument in 2019 under the leadership of Prof. Christian Herrmann from the University of Basel, Switzerland, together with other researchers and practitioners from Germany (Herrmann, Seelig, Ferrari & Kűhnis, 2019). The MOBAK KG test battery is a new method in the educational setting of kindergartens in the Slovak Republic and the EU, and no pilot testing has been conducted. It is expected that the testing will provide valid and reliable information about children's level of motor competence. Individual competency surveys will enable teachers to identify children with special needs, initiate special support to reduce their differences, and thus enable them to specify the selection of resources for the development of motor competences in the intervention program.

The MOBAK KG test battery will provide relevant information for the development of an intervention program on the level of mastery of the individual motor competences of the preschool child. It is a valid, practical and evaluative tool for such assessment. The MOBAK test items are constructed on the basis of normative pedagogical inferences that address the question of what competences and their level a child should achieve at a certain age in order to participate in physical education, to be realized in sports activities and exercises. The aim of the MOBAK instruments is to determine the level of mastery of the minimum standards, i.e., the curriculum outcomes. Based on the implementation and the results of the test battery, we can compile a selection of resources for the intervention program and gain knowledge about the children's basic motor competences.

## Processing of program conditions (Ischikawa diagram)

We use the Ischikawa "fishbone" diagram to show the relationship between problems and their possible causes. The main axis of the diagram represents the backbone; the problem, the ribs;

and the branches of the "tree" are formed by the individual influences that cause the problem. This diagram can become our first step in solving problems that may be caused by multiple causes. Processing is simple and easy to understand, which leads to the involvement of a wider range of solvers and brings ideas for new solutions. For effective processing of the cause and effect diagram, teamwork using brainstorming is appropriate. Structuring causes into "causes of causes" is done until all the root causes of the effect are revealed. Root causes can be considered as specific possible causes of a consequence that do not need to be further decomposed, and specific corrective or preventive actions can be proposed to address them.

*The construction procedure of the Ischikawa diagram:*

- the problem is illustrated in the head of the fish;
- representation of the spine and ribs (internal and external conditions and causes);
- creating and filling in the diagram ("why?" for each cause of the problem);
- identifying the root causes (diagram analysis);
- proposing measures to eliminate the causes.

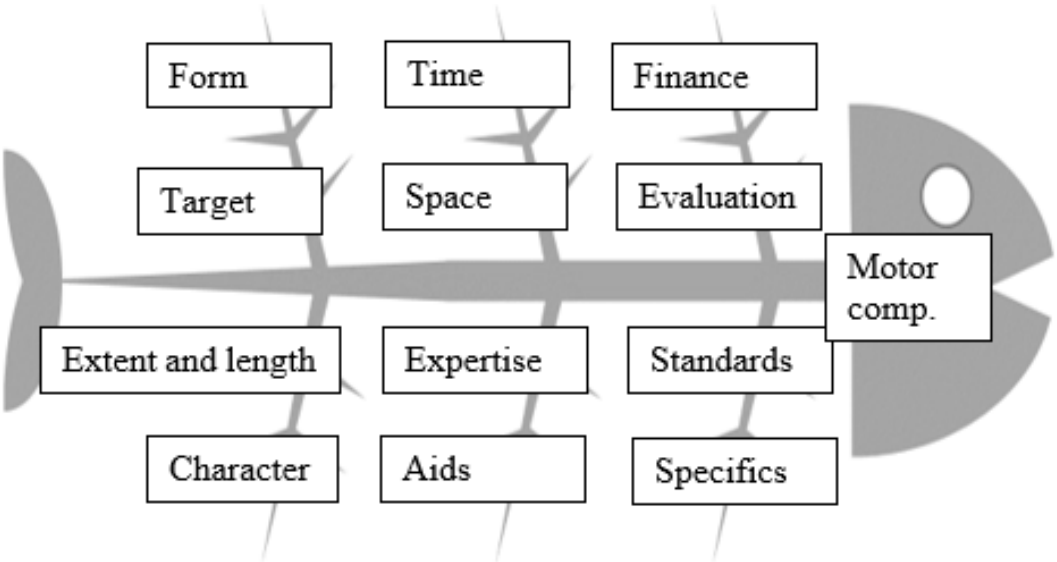


**Diagram 1:** Conditions for the provision and implementation of an incentive program for the development of motor competence *(Source: own processing)*

**Incentive program for children to develop motor competence - Characteristics of external and internal conditions:**

*Area:* Motor.

*Movement competence:* The child can maintain balance while walking on an inverted gymnastics bench (test item MOBAK KG).

*Form of intervention:* group interactive (heterogeneous class group of kindergarten children).

*Nature and focus of prevention:* primary (universal).

*Programme goal:* Improvement of motor competence by maintaining balance.

*Scope and duration of the program:* short-term program for 5 weeks, 1 session per week with 45 min of exercise activities.

*Time of implementation:* during the form of daily activity in the kindergarten of 45 min – games and activities of the children's choice, health exercise, educational activity, staying outdoors

*Aids:* different types and kinds of balancing aids (the aim is not training - training for the MOBAK KG movement test - walking on an inverted bench).

*Space:* gym/exercise room.

*Staffing (expertise):* kindergarten teacher (min. 1st level of higher education), primary school physical education teacher and selected pupils of 9th grade.

*Informed consent of the parent:* provided by the kindergarten teacher.

*Financial support:* not necessary (primary school equipment)

*Program specifics:* provision of suitable space for activities.

*Programme evaluation:* maintaining balance - walking on an inverted bench (MOBAK KG test battery item).

*Educational standards:* during the implementation of movement activities, ensure the developmental progress of the child in terms of the health and movement educational domain (performance and content standards, evaluation questions).

## Discussion

The preventive stimulation program focusing on the development of children's motor competences has a wide application in pedagogical practice; it is not only directly related to the field of physical competence development. The program can also be used and linked to in other areas. It has long been known, for example, that children with learning, concentration and behavioral disorders show mild signs of neurological dysfunction, which occurs as a result of immaturity of the central nervous system. Most of the time, these are healthy children, clever and bright, who, despite their potential, fail at school. Usually no pathology is detected or proven by various specialists, but many times parents and teachers know that something is wrong with the child.

We use the Special Movement School Program as a routine part of the elementary school curriculum, whether for the purpose of prevention in an effort to prevent learning, concentration and behavioral disorders, or for the purpose of direct intervention.

Such a school program helps children to develop motor skills through simple specific physical exercises, which are essential prerequisites for coping with the demands of school. All learning-related activities are also linked to motor and sensory perception. Writing requires good eye-hand coordination. Reading requires smooth eye movements. Mathematics, along with other subjects, requires good spatial orientation and sensory integration at a very good level. The school program helps to develop children's motor skills, co-ordination and balance by working with persistent primitive or underdeveloped postural reflexes and by stimulating the

vestibular system, resulting in increased concentration, less inner restlessness, and the disappearance or alleviation of difficulties in writing, reading or describing text. Spatial orientation and organizational skills are also improved. Overall, children begin to show more of their potential, and their performance and results at school improve significantly.

The program is designed so that it can also be applied to larger groups of children. It is an ideal tool for primary and nursery schools, etc.

## We form the following conclusions and recommendations for intervention and practice:

Kindergarten teachers do not have a comprehensive set of diagnostic tools for the detection of motor competences. In connection with diagnosing children's school readiness in practice, there is not yet developed a method of assessing the level of movement competences with a focus on future predominantly physical and sporting activities. We recommend diagnosing with the MOBAK-KG test battery, which focuses on movement competences (necessary for the child's and pupil's life) and has not yet been widely known to our teachers.

For kindergarten teachers, both areas of competence (movement with equipment and movement with own body) provide information on the summative level of movement competences. At the same time, we are able to determine the status of movement competence in the individual movement tasks of the MOBAK-KG test battery. A scoring system enables the level of basic movement competence to be determined.

By evaluating the individual test items, the movement areas and the interpretation results, it is possible to divide children into three different categories in each tested movement competence - area:

- children with a need for increased attention to the development of movement competences (educational assistance needed);
- children mastering basic movement competences;
- children with developed movement competences.

In practice, teachers can assess the following areas of status and change children's basic motor competences:

- screening: determining the current level of basic movement competences;
- monitoring: observing what the level of children's basic movement competences is and how physical education can be optimised in this area;
- population comparison: comparing what the differences are between groups (gender, age, other ...);
- diagnosis of the child's special needs: recognition of which basic movement competences should be particularly developed (lower level compared to the population);
- monitoring of the development process: continuous repeated monitoring of how the basic movement competences change in relation to the development of the child(ren);
- evaluation of the intervention: how basic movement competences change after a targeted physical education intervention.

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# Building excellence in educational organisations

Vanda Novoksonova, Adela Vitkovska

## Abstract

Excellence is usually perceived as being excellent in all our organisation does. This is not the case – excellence is a never-ending process of growth and development. Implementing the excellence approach requires resources, an open attitude, a future-oriented approach, and a strong will over time. Education is vitally important for our society and enhances society's overall development when all educational institutions strive to be the best they can be - to be excellent.

**Keywords:** Excellence, education, development, improvement planning, organisational self-assessment.

There is a constant need to improve the quality of educational institutions. *High-quality education and training will provide citizens with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to thrive and to ensure Europe's economic resilience and social prosperity. This includes the need to master critical competences, including basic skills and digital competences.*[1] Each educational institution has its quality management system. Institutions need to use an appropriate management framework, regardless of sector or size. Many educational institutions are not willing to fulfill the minimum quality standards alone, instead striving to continually develop and improve. Such institutions seek ways to become better than they are today and to become role models for others – to become excellent organizations. A helpful approach exists for all organizations striving to be excellent – Total Quality Management (TQM).

*TQM consists of organisation-wide efforts and an integrated system of principles, methods, and best practices to install and make a permanent climate in which an organisation continuously improves its ability to deliver high-quality products and services to customers.*[2]

The basic foundation of any holistic quality management system is the Deming cycle, also called the PDCA cycle – Plan, Do, Check, Act – where the cycle represents a never-ending process: planning the activity; implementing the plan; performing the activity, then checking the performance of the activity, also called self-assessment; and finally improving the plan. Different TQM models can support the organization on its way towards excellence, including European-developed and supported models based on the same PDCA cycle – for example, European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET).

*EQAVET is based on a quality assurance and improvement cycle (planning, implementation, evaluation/ assessment, and review/revision) and a selection of descriptors and indicators applicable to quality management at both VET system and VET provider levels. EQAVET does not prescribe a particular quality assurance system or approach, but provides a framework of common principles, indicative descriptors and indicators that may help in assessing and improving the quality of VET systems and VET provision. EQAVET can therefore be regarded as a 'toolbox,' from which the various users may choose those descriptors and indicators that they consider most relevant to the requirements of their quality assurance system.*[3]

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1 EUROPEAN COMMISSION: Improving quality and equity - initiatives, retrieved at 6.2.2023

2 D.R.KIRAN: *Total Quality Management - Key concepts and Case Studies,* Butterworth-Heinemann, 2016, 580 p., ISBN: 9780128110362

3 EUROPEAN COMMISSION: *European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training,*

Another European-developed tool is EFQM Model. The Model and the EFQM organization support the development of a culture of excellence in organizations of all sizes and sectors. *EFQM is an innovative, not-for profit organisation, fusing data-driven insights, curated learning and development and networking opportunities for the benefit of organisation and individuals worldwide.*[4]

The EFQM Model is a holistic organizational management framework used by organizations of all sectors and sizes in different parts of the world. This model is based on the PDCA cycle and is either used as the sole management tool of the organisation or in combination with other standards or frameworks such as ISO, Six Sigma, Lean, and others.

The model is updated regularly in order to reflect changes in the business environment. The last version of the EFQM Model is dated to the beginning of 2020. *To co-create the new*est *EFQM Model, there were surveyed nearly 2000 change experts, facilitated 24 workshops internally, interviewed leaders in over 60 diverse organisations and created a team of experts and contributors from across industries and academia.*[5]

The EFQM Model is divided into three parts – Direction, Execution, and Results. The first two parts specify what the organization plans to do and is doing, while the last part concerns what the organization has achieved or is planning to achieve in the near future. The Model consists of 7 criteria – Purpose, Vision & Strategy; Organisational Culture & Leadership; Engaging Stakeholders; Creating Sustainable Value; Driving Performance & Transformation; Strategic & Operational Performance; Stakeholder Perceptions.

The EFQM Model is non-prescriptive and fully adjustable to the organisation's needs. Therefore the reasons for using the EFQM Model are various. For some, it is the need for long-term development, increasing the organization's ability to adapt to change or improve the results or optimize processes.

Apart from these reasons, the implementation steps are very similar in all organizations, starting with informing all stakeholders about the planned journey to excellence with the support of EFQM Model. While communicating with internal stakeholders, it is essential to explain well why this is the way to go and the benefits for all involved after the successful implementation. The leader of educational institution needs to be very present in this implementation step. Usually, during the process of informing, some internal stakeholders are more interested than others and are ready to participate in the process actively. Those shall be organized in a group/groups to support the process further. There are specific criteria to take into account when setting up the groups.

The next step in the process is planning and performing the educational institution's self-assessment, using the seven EFQM Model criteria. Before the self-assessment, the organization needs to gather the data connected to each criterion. When performing the self-assessment, the organization needs to be as objective as possible, mentioning specific proofs for each topic and eventually the suggestions for improvement. To realize the last step of the PDCA cycle, it does not end with the self-assessment but continues with improvement planning and realization, plan adjustments, benchmarking, and learning. The organizational self-assessment shall be performed regularly to help the institution to understand the development stage and reveal

retrieved at 6.2.2023

4 EFQM: *The EFQM Model*, EFQM, Brussels, 2019, 49 p., ISBN: 978-90-5236-845-0

5 EFQM: *The EFQM Model*, EFQM, Brussels, 2019, 49 p., ISBN: 978-90-5236-845-0

further development opportunities. To support organizations in this process, EFQM developed a diagnostic tool: RADAR. *At its highest level, the RADAR logic states that an organisation needs to determine the Results it is aiming to achieve as part of its strategy, have in place a number of Approaches that will deliver the required results, both now and in the future, Deploy these approaches appropriately, Assess and Refine the deployed approaches to learn and improve.*[6]

The development process of an educational institution is continuous. Though organizations are striving for excellence, it can never be achieved, and this is the main principle of excellence – small incremental steps of improvement, learning from each other, and becoming better day by day.

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# Implementation of standards for improving student-centered learning

Jana Chovancová, Štefan Tkačik

## Abstract

The aim of this article is to point out and describe the process of harmonizing study programs with quality standards at the Faculty of Education of the Catholic University in Ružomberok. This process takes into account a stakeholder-oriented approach, especially students and employers. As a starting point for the improvement of the quality system, an extensive analysis of the perception of quality was carried out at the faculty through self-assessment tools. In connection with the results of the analysis and the development of various concepts, the most suitable procedure for the implementation of the system was chosen, considering the initial situation and in view of previous experience with the implementation and solution of projects from this area.

**Keywords:** Standards for the study program, Implementing a quality system, Education, LCA.

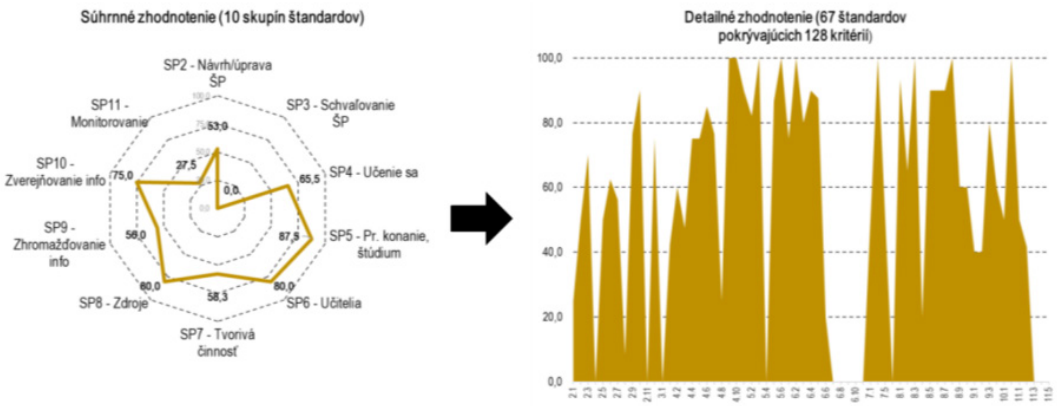
## Introduction

The first impulse for introducing a quality system at the Catholic University was in 2006, when the CAF quality management system was first implemented. A self-evaluation report was prepared for the entire university and initial recommendations for improving the system were implemented. However, a major impulse was the acquisition of 3 projects within the Education Operational Program in the years 2010–2015 (Strengthening the Quality Culture at the Catholic University in Ružomberok – 5/2010–4/2013, Increasing the Quality of Education, Research and Management System at the Catholic University in Ružomberok – 11/2011–10/2013; Building Good Practice in the Area of Internal Quality Assurance System at the Faculty of Education of the Catholic University in Ružomberok – 1/2013–12/2015). Through these projects, a process-oriented approach was implemented at the Faculty of Education of the Catholic University, and a system of internal quality assurance was introduced through the ESG standards [1]. The next stage was the implementation of the new Law 269/2018 on Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Subsequently, in early 2019, the SAAVŠ bodies were created and in the following year the basic standards for ensuring the level of the internal quality system and the quality of study programs were issued. Therefore, at the Faculty of Education of the Catholic University, various adjustments to the internal system, rules, policies, and procedures had to be made, both for the internal system and for the creation, implementation, and evaluation of study programs. This article will describe the basic stages of this process.

## Process of study programs harmonization

In the years 2015–2018, there was a decrease in activity on the part of the Ministry of Education towards building quality systems in universities, which changed in 2018 when the new Law 268/2018 on Quality Assurance in Higher Education was prepared and issued. In the following year, the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (SAAVŠ) was created, which in 2020 prepared standards for the internal quality assurance system, for study programs and for habilitation and inaugural proceedings. In January 2020, the Quality Commission was created

at the Faculty of Education at the Catholic University in Ružomberok, in which the interested parties were represented (representatives of employers, representatives of students, representatives of graduates) along with the management of the faculty, quality system experts and representatives of program coordinators. The goal of the commission was to prepare the transformation of the quality system to meet the requirements brought by the amendment to the Higher Education Act and the new law on quality assurance in higher education. The members of the commission actively participated in the nationwide and university-wide process of preparing and creating standards. In September 2020, the first standards for quality were issued along with the subsequent methodology for evaluating standards. At the university level, commissions were created that carried out audits in individual areas where the standards were to be applied. Similarly, in September and October 2020, an audit was carried out at the faculty to assess compliance with individual standards (Figure 1).




Subsequently, measures were adopted in November 2020 and a detailed schedule of tasks was developed to align the study programs with the standards and verify the quality system at the Faculty of Education at the Catholic University in Ružomberok.

During this period, the Faculty of Education at the Catholic University in Ružomberok was also a part of the implementation of the ERASMUS+ project Upgrade with Learner-Centered Approach (ULCA). This project was built on three key mutually linked frameworks: the implementation of a student-centered approach, which is in line with the EFQM model of excellence; and the ideas of self-regulation and teacher development in the educational environment. We can say that the goals of this project were closely related to meeting the standards for study programs, which were issued by SAAVŠ – particularly to standard 4: student-centered learning, teaching and assessment. Knowledge gained from the ULCA project could therefore be simultaneously applied in the process of aligning study programs with the standards for study programs.

The process had three stages: the preparation of legislation in the field of policies; procedures; and rules for the creation, modification, implementation, evaluation, and communication of study programs. For orientation in the field of quality, two guiding documents were created: the Internal System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education at the Catholic University in Ružomberok; and the document that we use for creating, modifying and approving study programs – the Policies, Procedures and Rules for Study Programs at the Catholic University in Ružomberok. Selected representatives of the leadership of the Catholic University (CU), together with the commissioner for quality assurance in higher education, worked on this documen-

tation. The second stage involved the preparation of accreditation documentation for individual study programs, which were then aligned with standards, which subsequently led to the third stage of submitting individual accreditation files to the CU Management Board and the CU Quality Board for assessment of compliance with standards for study programs. The creation of new materials that were part of the accreditation documentation was the responsibility of the commissioner for quality assurance in higher education at CU. During the process of creating the appropriate forms, representatives of individual CU faculties were continuously consulted, where various comments could be submitted which were then incorporated into the final versions of these forms.

Once the accreditation documentation for all aligned study programs was completed, we moved on to the final stage of harmonization, which was the submission of the accreditation documents to the governing board of CU, which was responsible for checking compliance with the standards of the study programs and the administrative correctness and completeness of the accreditation materials. After reviewing the documentation in the governing board of CU, the individual study programs were submitted for evaluation to the CU Quality Board, where working committees were assembled for this process, comprising experts from the relevant field of study, as well as internal and external parties of interest such as employers, graduates, and students.

## Implementation of study program harmonization

The implementation of the harmonization of study programs began with an internal audit of the criteria for study program standards, which was carried out in October 2020 at the level of the rectorate. The average compliance rate for all 128 criteria at the university was 62.7%. Some criteria were fully met, but most were around half met. Based on the audit, tasks were identified that needed to be carried out in order to ensure compliance with the standards for the study program. A total of 113 tasks of various scopes and complexities were formulated. These tasks were assigned to relevant internal parties at the university/faculties according to the content and nature of the task.

In addition to the internal audit of compliance with the criteria for study program standards, an audit of the personnel provision of individual study programs was also carried out at the Faculty of CU, and we also evaluated the creative activity of the main persons responsible for the implementation, development and provision of study programs and teachers of profile subjects. Based on this, it was decided which study programs would be harmonized.

In addition to the goal of increasing the quality of higher education through the fulfilment of standards for study programs issued by SAAVŠ, based on the implementation of the ULCA Erasmus+ project, we naturally set a sub-goal: to increase the quality of higher education through the implementation of a student-centered approach. In introducing this approach, we followed the seven principles of Professor Gabriela Lojová [2], which represent: active learning, content (relevant knowledge), cognitive and affective domains, approach to students (acceptance, encouragement), positive learning atmosphere, the role of the teacher and the role of the learner. We used the application of the above principles in the harmonization of study programs specifically with standard 4: student-centered learning, teaching and assessment.

In summer 2021, we started working on the accreditation materials that formed the new accreditation documents. The accreditation documentation was prescribed by the Directive of Policies, Procedures and Regulations of Study Programs at CU, which was still in the

process of being created at the time. The first document that the study program began to create was the Study Program Plan. The main parts of this document represented the justification for the study program proposal and indicated professions, feasibility attributes, compatibility with CU's mission and CU's long-term plan.

After the Study Program Plans were approved by the Commission for Quality Assurance at the Faculty of Education at CU in Ružomberok and the faculty dean, we moved on to creating Project Sheets, where the participating persons creating the respective study programs were determined. Among these people were external stakeholders such as employers and students. In this document, the coordinators defined the knowledge, skills and competencies that students should acquire upon completing the relevant program. The above two documents were subsequently submitted to meetings with employers, which were held between October and December 2021. We engaged in dialogue with employers, focusing mainly on indicated professions, the profile of the graduate and the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired after completing the study program. After incorporating any comments from employers, we were able to move on to creating matrices of learning goals and outcomes. The coordinators assigned knowledge, skills, and competencies to individual profile subjects that students will acquire in those subjects.

As part of the harmonization of study programs, there were also changes made to the credit and hour allocations in the semesters of different types of study programs, based on which credit and hour allocations were adjusted in specific subjects. For that reason, updates were made to all recommended study plans of harmonized study programs.

In parallel with the creation of the aforementioned documents, study program descriptions with internal evaluation reports were also prepared. From the perspective of assessing study programs for the acquisition of accreditation rights to award the appropriate academic titles, the aforementioned two documents are very important. The preparation of an internal evaluation report for all study programs was a very demanding process. Within the Commission for Quality of the Faculty of CU, working groups were created, to which all 128 criteria of standards for study programs were distributed. Meetings of working groups were held weekly, where each group presented the criteria of the internal evaluation report that they were responsible for. Others present had the opportunity to raise comments, or there was a discussion about the compliance of these criteria with the standards for study programs. In this way, the so-called universal version of the internal evaluation report was prepared, which was submitted to individual departments of the faculty with the aim of adjusting this report to the requirements of individual study programs, which are carried out by the departments and are included in the process of harmonizing study programs with the standards for study programs.

Another difficult task that we must mention was the implementation of monitoring key indicators for evaluating the standards set by SAAVŠ. A significant challenge was acquiring the necessary data on these indicators, as not everything was obtainable through automated means from the systems used by different departments of the faculty. It was necessary to acquire these data through manual methods by the appropriate personnel and department heads. The quality commissioner of the CU Faculty of Education created tables where the required monitored indicators for education input and output were listed and then distributed to certain departments, department heads, and other responsible individuals whose task was to provide the necessary data for these indicators.

The tables with indicators for evaluating the standards of study programs were used in the

process of evaluating study programs, which also stems from the requirements of the SAAVŠ standards. The person responsible for ensuring the quality of higher education at CU prepared a form for this evaluation, where certain grouped indicators are reflected in individual chapters, in which we evaluate the relevant area of the study program. Evaluation of study programs became a part of the annual reports of the departments.

To implement the new processes related to the quality system and align the study programs with the standards for study programs, it was necessary to familiarize every employee with these facts, so training sessions on quality were held for individual groups of employees.

The process of submitting accreditation files to the CU Steering Committee and the CU Quality Board for assessment of compliance with the standards for study programs was carried out from March 2022. This process was very demanding from a time perspective and from the perspective of ensuring the presence of individual persons, as the assessment of each program was carried out at the CU Faculty where the individual study programs were carried out. The assessment of compliance of study programs with standards was carried out until August 2022. We believe that the quality of study programs at the CU Faculty is at least sustainable. Our goal is to automate processes and tasks at individual departments that are necessary to meet the criteria of standards for study programs. We would like to achieve a situation where all teachers naturally adopt the standards for study programs and then the quality of study programs will truly improve and grow.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF A LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACH AS PART OF THE INTERNAL QUALITY SYSTEM

The standards for study programs issued by SAAVŠ (Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education) deal with several areas that the university must demonstrate compliance with. One of these areas, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Oriented to the Student, is closely linked to the main goal of the ULCA Erasmus+ project, which is to improve the quality of higher education by introducing a Learner-Centered Approach (LCA), which is in line with the EFQM model of excellence. This model is based on continuous improvement of organizational performance through self-assessment and subsequent implementation of activities. The principles used in implementing the learner-centered approach were also applied in achieving compliance with individual standards.

Within the standards and their individual criteria, we find criteria that set out that the rules, forms and methods of teaching, learning and assessment in the study program, and respect the diversity of students and their needs in achieving the goals and outputs of education.

Diversity is also ensured for students of different faiths in accordance with the Statute of the University. Further evidence of respecting the diversity of students and their needs are the comprehensive services of the University's Counselling Centre, which creates suitable conditions and has sufficient expertise for working with students – not only those with specific needs (university coordinator for students with specific needs, faculty coordinator).

The procedures and rules for organizing the studies of students with specific needs are regulated by the Rector's Directive on Supporting Candidates for Study and Students with Specific Needs at CU in Ružomberok. In case of need and based on a written request, the student can take courses in a special mode through an individual study plan. Another criterion of the standards stipulates that the forms and methods of teaching, learning and evaluating study results

encourage students to take an active role in the learning process and the development of their academic career. According to the Study Regulations of CU, the student chooses the part of the obligations prescribed by the study program and set out in the recommended study plan that they want to complete in the given academic year.

We can also mention the standards and criteria that are related to the student-oriented approach, which is the sense of autonomy, independence and self-evaluation that should be strengthened within the study program. Students are provided with appropriate guidance and support from teachers based on mutual respect and esteem. The study program is implemented in a way that strengthens students' internal motivation to constantly improve. Feedback on assessment is, if necessary, linked to counselling in terms of progress in the study.

In accordance with the Study Regulations of the CU Faculty, the faculty has established a system of study advisors, whose goal is to improve the university's study system and help students navigate and choose subjects effectively according to their own study plan, their interests, and the current job market situation. It also aims to assist students with their challenges during their studies, with communication with the environment, and provides counselling for student mobility.

In case the feedback indicates problematic progress in studies for a specific student, the faculty will provide effective support for the student's advancement. This can be done on the basis of an internal suggestion from a faculty employee or even a suggestion by the student themselves. Based on the suggestion, the Dean of Education of the relevant faculty may propose a working commission to investigate and suggest measures for the specific case.

Within the framework of this project, new knowledge was implemented in the form of "Teacher Self-Management Learn & Lead" elective subjects in the bachelor's and master's degree studies to better develop the potential of students. These subjects will serve to improve the readiness of students for the application of leadership skills in the educational environment through self-management. We want students to have expanded key competencies in areas such as metacognition, communication, and resilience. This will improve their orientation in the global context and enhance their professional development. We aim to achieve a situation where our graduates are able to plan their self-development and professional growth.

Based on the several selected criteria of standards in the area of student-oriented learning, teaching and assessment, we see a direct connection between the implementation of a student-oriented approach, which becomes an integral part of the internal quality system at the CU Faculty of Education. The implementation of a student-centered approach includes several steps, such as:

- Introduction of questionnaires for students to evaluate subjects and teachers, which are carried out after each semester.

- Introduction of a quality management system that allows for quick response to student needs and improvement of the quality of education.

- Introduction of a mentoring system for students, which helps them with their personal and professional development.

- Introduction of a student support system that allows them to address their problems and needs.

- Introduction of a reward and motivation system for students, which supports their active engagement in the educational process.

We believe that these steps will allow us to improve the quality of education and increase student satisfaction with the education provided.

## Conclusion

The process of harmonization of study programs with standards for study programs was very demanding, especially in terms of human resources and administration. It was necessary to introduce and set up new processes as well as create many new forms. The workload of all teachers and non-teaching staff greatly increased, which required immense effort and concentration. We can say that new processes within the faculty and university were set up well. There were certainly situations that we did not expect and that surprised us. We must state that the individual processes related to adjustments, proposals and the approval of study programs are significantly more time-consuming, which we could improve in the future. We believe that over time, as all new processes become familiar, this will only improve, and the result will be the provision of quality study programs.

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