

Leadership and Organisation for Teaching and Learning at European Universities

Final report from the LOTUS project



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This publication offers two Appendices available on the LOTUS webpage:
<https://bit.ly/3TGpj92>.

- Appendix 1: Leadership and change management in higher education. A Working Paper for developing the LOTUS methodology, by O. Vettori
- Appendix 2: Implementation Plan template of the LOTUS Leadership Development Programme

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Chapter 1 – The LOTUS project and its context

1. The context

The Leadership and Organisation for Teaching and Learning at European Universities – LOTUS¹ project was inspired by the growing attention to learning and teaching from both higher education institutions (HEIs) and governments in a European context, notably that of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The 2018 Paris Communiqué of the Bologna Process stated the commitment to “developing new and inclusive approaches for continuous enhancement of learning and teaching across the EHEA” and added as another hallmark of the EHEA the “cooperation in innovative learning and teaching practices”.² At the same time, HEIs across the EHEA increasingly pay attention to their learning and teaching strategies, whilst strategy implementation, capacity building and need for increased inter-institutional cooperation are ongoing issues for discussion and peer learning.

Against this background, the LOTUS project aimed at contributing to capacity building and strategic change management for learning and teaching at HEIs across Europe, and explored the potential of various actors (including HEIs, but also ministries, national agencies, university associations, student and staff unions, etc.)

to support transformation and innovation in learning and teaching. During the implementation of the LOTUS project, between September 2020 and November 2022, policy developments in the EHEA and in the European Education Area further confirmed its relevance. The Rome Communiqué in 2020³ with its Annex III – Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA⁴ stressed that actions are required for enhancement of “collaboration and partnership within and between the European higher education systems”, while the Communication from the Commission on a European strategy for universities in 2022 highlighted the support “needed to stimulate pedagogical innovation”⁵ in order to achieve relevant and excellent higher education. The pandemic, which started at the same time as the planned start of the LOTUS project, also influenced the course of the project. Peer-learning and regular policy dialogue-level conversations pointed to challenges being faced, but also opportunities created by the overnight shift to emergency remote teaching, followed by strategic reflections on how to address evolutions in learning and teaching in a post-pandemic era.

1 <https://eua.eu/resources/projects/786-lotus.html>

2 http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2018_Paris/77/1/EHEAParis2018_Communique_final_952771.pdf

3 http://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique.pdf

4 http://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_III.pdf

5 <https://education.ec.europa.eu/document/commission-communication-on-a-european-strategy-for-universities>

In addition to these European-level developments, LOTUS built on the results of, and followed up on the EU-funded EFFECT project (2015-2018), and in particular the 10 European Principles for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching.⁶ The project activities under LOTUS explored already existing good practices on institutional and national levels and created multiple occasions for policy dialogue focused on the enhancement of learning and teaching. The European University Association (EUA)'s prior experiences in conducting peer-learning groups with a thematic focus on learning and teaching also inspired the organisation of the Leadership Development Programme (LDP), one of the LOTUS activities.

2. The LOTUS project

Coordinated by the EUA and funded under Erasmus+, LOTUS was developed by a consortium of six partners, including major European stakeholder organisations with extensive experience in the enhancement of learning and teaching (the European Students' Union – ESU and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education – EURASHE), national-level stakeholders (the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland and the Irish Universities Association – IUA), as well as an individual university (the Vienna University of Economics and Business – WU Wien). Three European-level organisations also contributed to the project as associate members (the *Association européenne des Conservatoires* – AEC, the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities – EADTU, and the European Trade Union Committee for Education – ETUCE). In addition, LOTUS benefited from the involvement of representatives from various individual institutions and national authorities in its activities and meetings, as well as experts who were proposed by partners.



6 <https://www.eua.eu/101-projects/560-effect.html>

Originally planned before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic as an event-heavy and exchange-based project, with peer-learning activities and policy dialogue events, the methodology and activities of LOTUS were adapted to take full advantage of online formats and a mix of synchronous and asynchronous approaches. LOTUS offered online peer-learning activities fostering HEIs' capacity to develop and implement structured and systematic approaches to enhance learning and teaching, as well as to explore how learning and teaching can be best supported by national and European policies through online and in-person policy dialogue events.

The project was conducted in two interconnected strands.

1 The Leadership Development Programme (LDP)

The project consortium devised a methodology for the LDP and ran two cohorts of a 9-10-month LDP during the lifetime of the project. The LDP provided an opportunity to participating HEIs, who were either developing or implementing their strategies for enhancing learning and teaching, to exchange experiences and discuss capacity-building and change management in learning and teaching.

In total, 54 HEIs were selected through two open calls to participate in the two cohorts of LDP (see Annex 1). Based on priorities and challenges that HEIs themselves identified when applying to participate, they were grouped into Leadership Working Groups (LWGs) of 5-6 institutions. Each LWG had a facilitator appointed from a project partner to supervise the work programme and steer group discussions. Between one to three representatives from each institution joined the LWGs. Profiles of representatives included institutional leadership and other positions relevant for the development and implementation of learning and teaching policies at institutional level. During the 9-10 months of the LDP, induction, ad-hoc and debriefing workshops were offered online to all participants, in addition to 4-6 online meetings organised for each LWG. The format of those meetings was guided by an Implementation Plan template,⁷ which proposed a series of self-assessment

Project activities

1

A Leadership Development Programme (LDP), targeting higher education institutions across the EHEA

Bringing together HEIs to foster their capacity to develop and implement structured and systematic approaches to enhance learning and teaching: exchanging experiences, learning from peers.

2

A Policy Dialogue (PD), conducted both at national and European levels

How do different stakeholder groups (HEIs, national authorities, etc.) contribute to policy making in learning and teaching? How to develop effective policies: a study on national developments, policy dialogue workshops.

and discussion questions for participating HEIs to reflect on, both individually and as a group. They were also guided by the needs identified by the LWG members (priorities for learning and teaching and challenges to tackle through peer learning). The LWG meetings provided an opportunity to:

- discuss issues that were common to the group, and exchange inspirational practices on how to address them, based on case studies from their own and other institutions;
- receive peer feedback on different options for addressing similar issues;
- explore steps for problem-solving and strategy implementation to enable change.

⁷ See Appendix 2 on the LOTUS webpage: <https://eua.eu/resources/projects/786-lotus.html>

Complementing this work, the project consortium launched a platform with self-learning modules. LDP participants were encouraged to actively engage with these resources as a common basis for dialogue within the group, but also for inspiring conversations at their home institutions. Examples of such self-learning modules included how to handle communication across an institution; how to address creativity in learning and teaching; exploring the different models for leadership in university governance across the EHEA; and how to lead pedagogical development with a collegial model. As another resource, LWGs also had the possibility of inviting guest experts to address specific aspects.

2 The Policy Dialogue strand

Through research and policy dialogue events, this strand explored how different stakeholder groups in learning and teaching can support institutional developments, facilitate interinstitutional exchange and collaboration, and contribute to national and European policy development.

The study *National Developments in Learning and Teaching in Europe*⁸ mapped and analysed major policies and initiatives in 30 countries of the EHEA. The report was based on a series of semi-structured interviews with experts from European higher education systems.⁹

Fed by institutional perspectives from the LDP and findings from the national initiatives study, the project featured a series of eight interactive online or physical policy dialogue events:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| September 2021 Online | A series of webinars ¹⁰ to explore key topics for learning and teaching in the Finnish context organised by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Leading transformational change – taking advantage of digitalisation and cooperation” (1 September) • “Future-proof higher education” (8 September) • “Re-evaluating higher education teaching” (15 September) |
| 25-26 October 2021 Online | First European policy dialogue: Supporting the enhancement of learning and teaching organised by EUA: ¹¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of the study <i>National initiatives in learning and teaching in Europe</i> • Addressed leadership in learning and teaching, as a condition and enabler for learning and teaching enhancement and transformation. |
| 17 February 2022 Online | Second European policy dialogue (at the European Learning and Teaching Forum), organised by EUA: ¹² <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunchtime session to address policy developments under the Bologna Process. |
| 3 May 2022 Online | Policy dialogue workshop organised by IUA: ¹³ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic: Next steps for learning and teaching into tomorrow’s world. Based on the “Next Steps for Teaching and Learning” project.¹⁴ |
| 16-17 May 2022 Vienna, Austria | Policy dialogue workshop organised by the Vienna University of Economics and Business: ¹⁵ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Leaping forward in digitally enhanced teaching and learning: How can system level policy support HEIs” • A series of strands related to digitalisation: micro-credentials, e-assessment, artificial intelligence, and augmented reality to serve learning and teaching, future of work and future-proof skills. |
| 9-10 June 2022 Helsinki, Finland | Policy dialogue workshop organised by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland: ¹⁶ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing education and the changing face of learning and teaching. |

8 https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/lotus%20report_2022_fin2.pdf

9 « Systems » is used here as a generic term encompassing national higher education systems as well as countries where the competence for education is devolved in a way or another (like in Germany, Belgium, United Kingdom, Switzerland or Spain).

10 <https://eua.eu/news/721:lotus-webinar-series,-1,-8-and-15-september.html>

11 Summary of outcomes available: <https://www.eua.eu/downloads/content/lotus%20summary%20of%20outcomes.pdf>

12 A recording is available here: <https://youtu.be/y2AG3UjAm1s>.

13 <https://eua.eu/news/876:lotus-policy-dialogue-workshop-on-leadership-and-strategic-change-for-development.html>

14 <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/vital/nextsteps/>.

15 <https://eua.eu/news/861:lotus-policy-dialogue-workshop-on-leading-digitalisation.html>

16 <https://eua.eu/news/894:lotus-policy-dialogue-workshop-in-helsinki,-finland.html>

The policy dialogue events targeted university representatives, European policy makers, representatives of national authorities and other stakeholders in higher education, with each one building on lessons learnt from the preceding events.

The project concluded with:

- a final conference, held at the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium on 28-29 September 2022, which gathered approximately 100 participants;¹⁷
- the current final publication;
- and a webinar held on 28 November 2022.

3. The outline of the next chapters

The next chapters will dive into lessons learnt from the project:

- Chapter 2 details topic-based priorities and challenges identified through peer exchanges in the course of the project and provides examples of practices and leadership approaches to address them.
- Chapter 3 addresses the concept of leadership in teaching, which has been a horizontal issue in all project activities, and provides lessons learnt from LOTUS.
- Chapter 4 summarises lessons learnt and key messages, and provides reflections on ways forward.

17 <https://eua.eu/events/242-leadership-and-organisation-for-teaching-and-learning-at-european-universities-%E2%80%93-lotus-project-final-conference.html>

Chapter 2 – Addressing priorities in learning and teaching

The discussions under the LDP and the policy dialogues created a platform for exchange and peer learning where different aspects of learning and teaching at HEIs were addressed, focusing on what HEIs find challenging and would like to improve.

Throughout the LDP and policy dialogue discussions, participants reported that they appreciated the opportunity of exchanging ideas with peers on common challenges and problems, many relating to the situation caused by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. It brought relief, comfort and encouragement to learn of and from mistakes shared by other university leaders, and also helped to fix some of those problems collectively. Many institutional leaders agreed that this was key to fostering an atmosphere of openness and empathy. This work also helped many participants to revisit their understanding of leading teaching at their institutions.

Participants came from various countries and systems in the EHEA, and from different types of institutions with different missions, including specialised ones, such as conservatoires and medical universities. The diverse participation may have complexified the work of the groups in some respects. But it also contributed to the quality of this experience and confirmed the feasibility and added value of European level staff development approaches.

From the discussions, common priorities and challenges arose and can be grouped under the following areas:

- Diverse learners' needs
- Staff development
- Inter-institutional cooperation
- Digitalisation

1. Diverse learners' needs: adapting the educational offer

For over a decade now, the Bologna Process has advocated for student-centred learning as a central paradigm for driving transformation in the educational offer and for learning and teaching. Concomitantly, the learning outcome-based approach has been strongly promoted for aligning curriculum design, delivery and assessment. Whilst learning outcomes seem relatively common and widespread across the EHEA now (Gaebel and Zhang, 2018), HEIs and teachers continue to work on improving their practices and implementing student-centred learning in their context. Throughout the LDP as well as at the final conference of the project, participants identified and discussed the challenge of adapting the education offer so that it addresses both societies' and students' needs, while enabling teachers' personal and professional development.

During the project activities, this challenge was looked upon from the angles of both policies and practices of learning and teaching. The discussions addressed innovation in teaching, institutional structures and learning environments, fit-for-purpose curriculum design, delivery and assessment, practical competences and transversal skills for students, practice-based learning, lifelong learning, flexible learning offers and use of micro-credentials.

Already before the pandemic, HEIs have been increasingly working towards more flexible learning and teaching paths. When emergency remote teaching became a practice during the pandemic, everyone realised that barriers can be removed, and learning can become more self-paced and bite-sized. With these societal changes and the increasingly diverse student body, shifting away from the fully on-site educational approach has

become more common: student choices are now heavily conditioned by commuting and accommodation costs. At the same time, distance learning is not suitable for everyone, and certain learning potential gets lost by increasing online provision even where technology is mature enough to provide personalised, adaptive learning.

From the leadership perspective, many HEIs noted difficulties in implementing these plans for change, which often related to **a lack of shared understanding and ownership among those with direct responsibilities for implementation** in faculties and classrooms. Implementation of such changes also requires a significant level of agency.

Case study: A lab to help in designing and updating courses

Aligning study programmes with students' needs is a major challenge for online HEIs since a majority of their students are adult learners with diverse needs and circumstances. The Laboratory of Educational Material and Methodology (LEMM) of the **Open University of Cyprus (OUC)** designed and implemented a 6-month pilot action during the 2022 spring semester to redesign and update 35% of the modules of some of its courses. The pilot action aimed to better take into account the diverse needs of students. The revised courses have recently been accredited by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA).

Under this action, academic staff received group and individual guidance from a designated Supporting Team in order to assess and redesign course structures, educational materials, interactive activities and assessment approaches in the OUC's virtual learning environment (eClass). At the same time, the academic staff was offered a community space on eClass to discuss and share common issues and best practices together with other academics. As a result of this action, 35% of thematic units were redesigned successfully, right in time for the new academic year. After evaluating this pilot, a new action is currently designed in order to redesign and update all accredited modules, before the 2023-2024 academic year.

*Antri Avraamidou, Laboratory of Educational material & Educational Methodology
Open University of Cyprus*

Case study: A collegial way to develop a new mission statement for learning and teaching

At the **Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences (Germany)**, a working group comprising members of different study programmes, experts in learning and teaching, and administrative staff and students, has been set up jointly by the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs and the university's Commission of Learning and Teaching to develop a university-wide Mission Statement for Learning and Teaching.¹⁸

The group had a kick-off meeting in February 2020 and from then on, the whole development process was organised fully online, due to Covid-19. At the kick-off meeting, the working group agreed on the development steps, the timeline, the working approach and most importantly the following premises and goals:

- Elimination of paper tigers
- Future-oriented and realistic approach
- Critical consideration and reflection
- Agreement that the process should suit us!
- Participation of various stakeholders and target groups
- Students' perspective as a special focus
- Feasibility and containment
- Broad understanding of quality development

The working group functioned until February 2022, and by then more than 20 online workshops, regular consultations with the Vice Rector and the Commission of Learning and Teaching, as well as asynchronous work were carried out. Wider participation of the university community was ensured through various formats such as a thematic annual University Day event for the university community, salon evenings and feedback via moodle courses, creating a common understanding and ownership. This Mission Statement serves as an important tool for quality development and offers a shared framework to the university community for orientation and development of learning and teaching. The adopted Mission Statement will be followed up with implementation activities; for these, continued communication, discussion and participation of the university community are central. Further exchanges and engagement opportunities are being planned.

*Urte Böhm, Innovation and quality development in studies and teaching
Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences, Berlin*

18 <https://www.ash-berlin.eu/hochschule/profil/lehrprofil/#c26322>

In order to tackle student-centred approaches, institutions first need to **understand who students are and what their needs are, through evidence-based, data-based approaches**. Some LDP participants identified a growing gap between how school graduates wish to learn and how teaching is provided in higher education. Making content more attractive to students, designing flexible learning paths, offering lifelong learning opportunities in consideration of students' career needs and their diverse profiles, as well as supporting students in raising their issues are not conventional practices across all HEIs. Some good practices and solutions exist already in various places. Methods like design thinking, project-based learning, research-based learning, work-based pedagogy and flipped classrooms are most commonly identified for innovating classrooms and curricula. The lack of proper funding and organisational infrastructure are frequently mentioned as hurdles. Another concern expressed by HEIs is that students themselves may be used to more traditional ways of learning. Innovative learning and teaching approaches might encounter resistance both from students and teachers, which can be frustrating for those who advocate for student partnership.

Making student partnership the rule, and clearly and regularly communicating, promoting, and showcasing this partnership while adapting innovation in teaching, was identified as the first key step in overcoming reluctance or lack of engagement towards adapting learning and teaching approaches. Asking students to fill course evaluation surveys is a widespread practice; yet, it alone does not suffice and should be complemented by more interactive ways of feedback solicitation and partnership. Student engagement can drastically improve by measures such as more user-friendly evaluation surveys, short and anonymous feedback exercises at the end of each class, trust-building in receiving and explicitly using students' feedback for improvement – thus closing the feedback loop. HEIs under the LDP also suggested closer involvement of students at their institutions, encouraging them to exercise their leadership skills. Another institutional practice was to offer monetary compensation to students when they invested significant time in enhancing learning and teaching in various capacities. In addition, many HEIs participating in LOTUS activities agreed that, when adopting new policies or measures to support learning and teaching, institutional leadership has to anticipate difficulties or resistance, and has to consider how to mitigate possible frustrations from any side.

Another key point was the **creation of more learning opportunities on student-centred learning and innovative teaching approaches**, in order to make them consistently available for teachers and staff. Establishing learning and teaching centres or other similar structures and engaging some of the faculties and departments into this work, provided resources permit this kind of “cascading”, is crucial for innovation and enhancement of learning and teaching opportunities. Expectations about what transformation can be achieved over a certain period of time need to be realistic, considering resources required and available, and resulting workload for faculty and department members.

Case study: A project approach to provide support and funding for pedagogical innovation

In **Tampere University (Finland)**, two projects were developed in 2019 to address the lack of time that often hinders the development of education and teaching: the Flip & Learn project and the Digital Pedagogy project. In both, individual teachers can apply for funding to develop their own teaching. In the Flip & Learn project, teachers can apply for funding of up to €12,500, for being replaced on teaching duties for approximately three months, during which they change the pedagogical framework of the course into a flipped classroom format. The Digital Pedagogy project allows teachers to develop their course in whatever way they like as long as digitalisation is involved. In addition to the costs for teaching replacement, these projects can also include other costs.

*Sanna Kivimäki, Senior specialist
Tampere University*

Case study: Creating advice and evidence for inclusive curriculum

At Queen Mary University of London (UK), an 18-month project was undertaken to create advice and evidence for educators on how to ensure an inclusive curriculum so that all the diverse learners' needs are met. To develop a shared institutional understanding of an inclusive curriculum, eight principles were developed, supported by a wide range of case studies.¹⁹ Acknowledged and celebrated, the case studies were then applied to support other educators across the institution. To these resources, guidance for educating neurodivergent learners²⁰ including advice on Universal Design for Learning²¹ was added. The outcome of this project is a shared understanding and shared direction of improvement for the educational practice at the university. This work drew on Queen Mary University of London's Strategy 2030,²² to "be inclusive and maintain our proud tradition of nurturing and supporting talented students and staff regardless of their background and circumstance".

*Janet De Wilde, Director of Queen Mary Academy
Queen Mary University of London*

Flexibility in the education offer should also go hand in hand with **student wellbeing**. Related considerations became an even more pertinent issue during and following the Covid-19 pandemic. To address this, many HEIs mentioned the need for developing and implementing an inclusion and wellbeing strategy in their institutions. Commonly, this is taken up by leadership, for example the vice-rector in charge for diversity. Learning and teaching centres, or other similar structures, can also play an important role in assessing and analysing the wellbeing needs at different stages of the student life cycle.

Key messages – Diverse learners' needs: adapting the educational offer

- The leadership at HEIs should clearly raise discussions, consult the university community, and communicate on the development of flexible learning approaches, in order to achieve a common understanding across the institution. This would help ensure commitment of staff and students.
- A functional student-centred approach requires regular feedback loops in different forms involving students and teachers – from short and regular feedback surveys to large group discussions and focus groups.
- The student body can be heterogeneous, and individuals with their different backgrounds have different needs. This requires evidence-based analysis of who students are. Developing and implementing inclusion and wellbeing strategies can also support reflection on students' needs and complement the development of the educational offer.
- Student-teacher partnership should be valued and considered as indispensable for enhancing teaching. This implies developing student agency and capabilities to actively engage with their learning, valuing their learning process (and not exclusively discipline contents), and providing recognition for their engagement.
- Teachers should be granted sufficient freedom and resources to innovate, regarding methods and approaches, also in response to changing student and labour market needs. They should be given opportunities to learn from existing practices and advice on pedagogical approaches.

19 <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/queenmaryacademy/educators/resources/inclusive-curriculum/case-studies/>
20 <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/queenmaryacademy/educators/resources/inclusive-curriculum/neurodivergent-learners/>
21 <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/queenmaryacademy/educators/resources/inclusive-curriculum/universal-design-for-learning/>
22 <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/strategy-2030/>

2. Staff development, academic careers and the teaching ecosystem

Teaching as part of the professional identity and career of an academic, as well as the related question of professional development are increasingly addressed in policy and institutional discussions for a number of years already.

Under the LOTUS LDP, participating HEIs confirmed a strong interest towards the professional development of teachers. While there is growing agreement that teaching is core to the academic practice, and should be respected as scholarly and professional, teachers and HEIs are still looking for the most appropriate ways to better recognise teaching in academic careers, provide continuous professional development in teaching, and provide the necessary support, incentives, and rewards for teaching.

The exchanges under the LDP confirmed the difficulty of changing an academic culture dominated by research, and establishing parity of esteem between research and teaching. Early-career staff is often under the double pressure to research and publish, and at the same time develop their teaching practice.

Devising pathways for **recognising teaching in careers** is crucial for valuing teaching efforts and achieving parity of esteem between research and teaching. Examples of initiatives for recognising and supporting teaching include: mandatory courses in teaching for PhD candidates, pedagogical competence requirements as criteria for recruitment and career progression, recognition of teaching successes during regular staff appraisals.

LDP participants also underlined the importance of **celebrating teaching and giving value to teaching innovation**. Public acknowledgement and appreciation can be provided through teaching excellence awards, student-organised award ceremonies and special titles for teachers, with financial prizes and incentive schemes.

Research on teaching (e.g., through scholarship of teaching and learning), and experimentation with new teaching methods using evidence-based approaches is yet another important way.

Teaching is not taking place at HEIs only as an individual activity: it has a collective and ecosystem dimension. HEIs increasingly grant attention to learning and teaching through institutional and faculty-level strategies and policies, emphasising it as institutional mission and collective responsibility.

Team teaching and pedagogical coordination within departments are more and more widespread; curricula can be designed by a committee; and digitalisation policies may change the way individuals collaborate on teaching. Giving publicity and endorsement for **successful collaborative teaching initiatives and activities** is a way of strengthening teaching as part of the institution's professional practice and mission.

Case study: A School of Junior Academics to develop teaching skills

The Centre for Educational Growth at **Rīga Stradiņš University (Latvia)** runs the School of Junior Academics²³ (SJA), an annual six-month programme for developing the teaching skills of academic staff. The school was set up with the support of the European Social Fund (ESF) in 2019.

Every week, the SJA gathers 25 academics from different units to strengthen the university's pedagogical foundations, learn new, specific competences and develop innovations that will benefit students' learning. Topics include student-centred learning and teaching, pedagogical communication, academic integrity, leadership, assessment methods, etc. This helps not only enhancing pedagogical knowledge, skills and attitudes, but also strengthens academics' sense of belonging to the community, and also their agency and professional well-being.

*Nora Jansone-Ratinika, Director of the Centre for educational Growth
Rīga Stradiņš University*

23 <https://www.rsu.lv/en/news/students-are-winners-when-rsu-lecturers-participate-rsu-school-junior-academics>

Many LDP participants saw a good offer of **continuous professional development (CPD)** as a priority. Only in a small number of HE systems is CPD mandatory (Zhang, 2022). In other systems, decisions on whether it is mandatory and voluntary are taken at HEI, but at different levels: the decision-making power can lie with central governing bodies or heads of faculties and deans. Some LDP participants reported that CPD is mandatory for their new teachers but not for the established, more senior staff. Many HEIs try to strike a balance between compulsory and non-compulsory CPD activities. At some institutions, mandatory CPD has created a community feeling among the teachers, who were also rewarded with certificates or digital badges to attest to their achievement in CPD.

But a key issue is how to incentivise CPD engagement among those who are not interested. Academic staff's reluctance or lack of motivation to engage with developmental activities in teaching should be carefully and properly addressed. It may relate to other elements in the teaching ecosystem, such as the lack of participatory governance for learning and teaching (teachers not being properly involved in decisions regarding learning and teaching strategies), the lack of time against a heavy workload, the lack of recognition for CPD, or also a mismatch of CPD offer and staff's actual needs.

Overall, it was emphasised that there is no one-size-fits-all approach: the "right CPD approach" greatly depends on the collegial and academic culture and the needs of the institution. CPD contents should continuously seek to address the actual development needs of teachers. To this end, it is important that teachers across the institution can share and discuss their needs and understanding with other teachers, and are given the opportunity to dialogue with leadership on this issue. Examples of practice in this regard include: physical meeting spaces for teachers and pedagogical support staff; reinforcing communities of practice as open and constructive conversational spaces for exchanges on teaching; and supporting interdisciplinary groups on teaching. Encouraging peer-to-peer learning among teachers is one of the possible avenues.

Case study: How to support artists to become teachers in their field?

Teachers at the **Royal Conservatoire in The Hague (Netherlands)** have generally started their careers as eminent artists in music or dance. How do we help them to acquire relevant didactic skills in addition to their high-level artistic skills? For this purpose, the Royal Conservatoire has established a teacher development programme entitled The Artist as Teacher. The programme aims at giving teachers, at any stage of their career and expertise, stimulating learning experiences to increase their knowledge and skills in educating and coaching conservatoire students. The basic principle behind the programme is that participating teachers co-shape the programme by sharing expertise and experience, reflection and inter-vision. Core subjects covered in the programme include the participants' views about teaching future musicians, how to provide feedback in teaching and after assessments, the strengths and pitfalls of the teacher-student relationship, the why, how and what of assessment, the professional perspectives for students and research in the arts. The course contains 10 meetings of three hours. In addition to the meetings, teachers will engage in mutual lesson visits with one or more colleagues, including a shared reflection afterwards.

*Martin Prchal, Vice-Principal Education
Royal Conservatoire, The Hague*

It is necessary to ensure that each institution has a place with the specific agency of working on teaching enhancement, which can be the **learning and teaching centres** or similar structures. Their actual approach can be very different depending on the institutional culture and the goals set for teaching enhancement.

As enhancing teaching through career paths and better recognition for teaching may at least partly depend on national, system-level frameworks and policies, it also requires policy makers to review whether existing regulations and measures enhance or hinder the development of learning and teaching. In order to be successful, this requires a **multi-stakeholder approach**, also involving HEIs and their different member groups.

Key messages - Staff development, academic careers and the teaching ecosystem

- Recognising and giving value to teaching is essential. Teaching is an integral part of the academic profession, and should be acknowledged as a scholarly and professional activity. A range of differently scaled and complementary measures, from career paths to incentive systems and professional development offers, should support teaching.
- A holistic view of the professional identity of academics should be developed, so as to take into account their different missions (research, teaching, service to society, administrative duties...) without overburdening them. This requires a reform of academic career paths and assessment towards more parity of esteem for teaching (as compared to research). Such change will take time to be implemented, and lead to change in mindsets. Such policy changes will also require solid monitoring processes, continued support measures, and sustainable approaches and funding beyond pilot projects.
- Teachers' intrinsic motivation to seek the best ways to teach their students has to be nurtured. Lack of time or other constraints may hamper and restrict the use of teaching support, professional development opportunities, and even of funding support. Policy makers and institutions may wish to review existing regulations and available support and funding, with the aim of enabling the most appropriate and fit-for-purpose use of resources.

3. Inter-institutional collaboration

Inter-institutional cooperation has been identified as a key enabler for learning and teaching, and a major opportunity for student and staff learning. Such cooperation may take different forms, from resource sharing to organising student and staff mobility or joint programmes. It may take the shape of activities conducted through national, dedicated structures, networks of institutions, bi-lateral institutional cooperation, and the like.

Notably, the European Universities alliances²⁴ provide interesting cases for transnational cooperation between institutions, which may enable deeper and diverse collaborations in learning and teaching.

Case study: Value-based partnership and accessible leadership for successful cooperation

E³UDRES², a European Universities alliance that brings together mostly universities of applied sciences,²⁵ builds on its strengths of providing practice-oriented learning and teaching and user-oriented research in close cooperation with the world of work and regional communities. A focus on sustainability, openness to innovative, human-centred approaches, and focus on digitalisation – probably shared with other alliances – cover the core values and guiding principles of the alliance's mission.

The partner institutions are relatively small, their size varying from 700 up to 29,000 students, while the entire alliance accommodates 100,000 students which is fewer than the student bodies of some individual institutions in other alliances. Given this, cooperating as an alliance brings a great opportunity for enhancing the expert capacity of individual universities, access to a wider range of specialisations and benefit from other partners' strengths, which may be missing. While different fields of expertise strengthen the interdisciplinarity and overall profile of the alliance, the general strategic focus on institutional transformation, opportunity to learn from others and share capacity for developing new approaches have been repeatedly emphasised as crucial by the leaders at various levels of partner institutions.

The flat governance hierarchy of universities of applied sciences, as well as their relatively small institutional size allow an easy access to the top leadership. The members of the alliance are committed to flexible decision-making and continuous and active engagement, which strengthens the notion of partnership, and allows quick response to possible challenges. This conveys a clear message to all staff and students that they can engage in discussions about the goals and activities of the alliance.

*Michal Karpisek, Senior Policy Expert
E³UDRES² alliance*

²⁴ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative>

²⁵ See the members of E³UDRES² - Engaged and Entrepreneurial European University as Driver for Smart and Sustainable Regions here <https://eudres.eu>

What are the reasons for starting the collaboration? Participants of the LOTUS final conference recommended answering this question, before getting involved in any inter-institutional collaboration. The purpose and goals of any inter-institutional collaboration activity need to be clearly understood by those leading the collaboration, as well as consulted with, and communicated in some detail to the staff and students. This seems particularly important for the model of European Universities alliances: For such long-term collaborations aimed at deep integration of learning and teaching strategies, structures and approaches, the need for broad common understanding across the institutions is even more acute. Another important issue is the sustainability of collaborations; the current funding model of European Universities alliances bears a high risk of disruption to the integrated learning and teaching processes, once the Erasmus+ funding expires.

The LOTUS LDP itself is an example for inter-institutional collaboration, as it provided a trust-based space for exchanges and peer learning. Participants reflected on how inter-institutional collaboration helped them to **build communities of practice across institutions** (nationally and internationally), find people to collaborate with, receive formal and informal support depending on the type of collaboration, and ultimately benefit from peer observations from across institutions.

Some HEIs stressed the importance of **international collaboration**. Apart from its immediate impact on learning and teaching, and use for teachers, it would also enhance the visibility of the university, promote their study programmes, and provide an advantage for recruitment and fundraising, as well as for international rankings. Participants underlined the need to ensure that the entire institution, including staff and students, was committed to and took ownership of international learning and teaching cooperation, and to include this into **the institutional strategy or vision for internationalisation**. In particular students should not only be seen as recipients of international study opportunities: they are also enablers of internationalisation and their engagement as partners can be crucial for successful international cooperations.

Whether in international or national interinstitutional collaboration, system-level authorities have a role to play through the regulatory frameworks, funding and also support measures. While the importance and benefits of partnerships and collaboration in learning and teaching are much valued, systems differ considerably regarding regulation, provision of support and financing (Zhang, 2022).

In some higher education systems, inter-institutional collaboration can be successfully implemented among HEIs of the same system; some system frameworks and measures tend to encourage competition rather than collaboration on inter-institutional learning and teaching, e.g., for funding, student recruitment, etc. Thus, national/system-level authorities can play a role in creating a conducive environment for inter-institutional collaboration among HEIs of the same country/system, but also for supporting their strategic orientation and capacity to engage internationally. As suggested by participants of the LDP, policy dialogues and the final LOTUS conference, **multi-layer consultations and collaboration platforms need to be driven from the system level** to enable exchanges and build inter-institutional collaboration. Recognition of inter-institutional collaborations through qualitative metrics can also provide an incentive.

Case study: A national capacity-building project to support digital learning and teaching

In Ireland, the **Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning**²⁶ (EDTL, 2019 – 2022) project was led by the Irish Universities Association (IUA), with seven university partners across Ireland. The project has resulted in enhanced capacity to support digital teaching and learning in each partner university, and collaboratively produced resources²⁷ for staff and students, openly available across the Irish HE sector and beyond. By fostering collaboration and community at individual, institutional and sectoral levels, common challenges were identified, addressed and adapted to develop digital competences of teaching staff and to enhance the student digital learning environment. Student partnership was a core principle of the project, with student interns working as team members²⁸ at every level. Key enablers included a neutral project lead, alignment of the project vision with institutional strategies, leadership at all levels, and a focus on people and communities.

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Irish Universities Association*

26 <https://www.iua.ie/ourwork/learning-teaching/digital-learning/>

27 <https://edtl.blog/the-edtl-approach/>

28 <https://edtl.blog/about/student-interns/>

HEI leadership can also provide incentives for promoting inter-institutional collaboration at the institutional level. The **institutional leadership's responsibility and steering** is key in communicating benefits of any collaboration to members of the university community, in providing a direction while respecting the institution's values, and in making sense of what inter-institutional collaboration can bring in the staff's daily practice.

Key messages - Inter-institutional collaboration

- Inter-institutional collaboration can be a key enabler and driver for development, quality enhancement, transformation and innovation of learning and teaching.
- Success of inter-institutional collaboration in learning and teaching, whether in national or international setting, heavily depends on how conducive the environments are, as conditioned by system-level frameworks. Funding, multi-stakeholder consultations, collaboration platforms and qualitative metrics are essential for fostering inter-institutional collaboration at the system/national level.
- Trust building, commonly agreed and shared direction, as well as responsive and responsible leadership are key features for ensuring an institution-wide commitment to inter-institutional collaboration.
- The purpose and goals of any inter-institutional collaboration for learning and teaching need to be clearly defined and commonly understood by all who engage with it.
- Students are key participants but also key enablers for inter-institutional collaboration.

4. Digitalisation in learning and teaching

Digital transformation for learning and teaching is a key topic for HEIs across the EHEA, as well as for European policy makers. How to lead and shape it was largely discussed across the LOTUS LDP and was also the theme of one LOTUS policy dialogue workshop (Vienna, 16-17 May).

Digitalisation creates opportunities for **new roles and rules in learning and teaching**, posing questions such as: what is "good" in learning design, what is the learning gain for students when choosing a delivery mode over another, or how easy is it for students to navigate through the new digital opportunities. The student journey should be the main focus for strategic planning related to digitally-enhanced learning and teaching at HEIs.

A learning module: Developing teachers' pedagogical digital competence

Mälardalen University (Sweden) prepared for LOTUS LDP participants a short learning module addressing the development of pedagogical digital competence.

It can be viewed under the following link:
https://play.mdh.se/media/t/0_39jfh2ab



Digitalisation is a cross-cutting issue: it **needs to be considered in different policies and action plans** as a transformational issue, to be distinguished from the emergency remote teaching offered under the specific circumstances caused by the pandemic. HEIs and systems have to support the enhancement of the digital competences of staff and students. This also requires changes of the regulatory frameworks, which, for example, still restrict different delivery modes (on site, online, blended). Another priority area for development are digital infrastructures, including online libraries, virtual learning management systems, communication tools and platforms. Developing strategic approaches for selection, maintenance and use of digital infrastructures, and also adopting the physical spaces can be a challenge for HEIs.

Some HEIs mentioned that implementation of new digital policies may raise tensions between administrative and academic staff. There must be a vision or strategy that unites people around the goal of digitalisation, and diligent planning. From the beginning this has to consider a clear division of tasks and responsibilities, the resulting workload for administrative and teaching staff, and the provision of dedicated staff for technology support.

While unpacking these questions, LDP participants largely agreed that leading transformation in digitalisation requires **data and an evidence-based approach**. It has to take into account the different points of view and needs of students and staff. Data points and analysis are also key for understanding the student journey and identifying possible improvements. It can allow HEIs to understand the learning difficulties in a diverse student body and identify the best ways to address them. Such measures can drastically improve the participation and success of students from underrepresented backgrounds, for instance. Risk mitigation strategies and policies that anticipate different types of difficulties with digitalisation could be helpful. This also requires expertise and training on cyber-security, ethics in data management, and interoperability of data standards.

HEIs also showed particular interest towards applying both digital and conventional methods of **assessment**.²⁹ Conducting digital assessment seems to have been a challenge at many places during the lockdown periods of the pandemic. It required outsourcing or building a viable administration system that is user-friendly for staff and students, as well as online assessment procedures and supervision mechanisms. It also raised data security and privacy issues.

Case study: Tackling assessment in a digital environment

Shortly before the Covid-19 pandemic, the Vienna University of Economics and Business (Austria) started building an online examination environment including a supervision platform. An in-house system was preferred to existing commercial supervision platforms due to high costs, legal concerns over the processing of student data and incompatibility with the university's in-house developed learning management system. All that students needed to take an online exam was a notebook or PC with Google Chrome, a webcam, and a microphone.

Especially at the beginning of the pandemic, the Digital Teaching Services Unit supported teachers in using the online examination system. Guidelines, consultation hours and information events were offered. In addition, exams prepared by the teachers were reviewed before in order to avoid errors. During larger examinations (more than 150 participants) conducted in online supervision, technical support was offered to students. The training offer has been expanded and is now part of the general continuing training programme, which is optional for teachers.

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Vienna University of Economics and Business*

²⁹ Under another project (DIGI-HE), in 2021-2022, a thematic peer group composed of 10 HEIs specifically worked on the topic of curriculum and assessment in a digitally-enhanced learning and teaching context. Their report is available here: <https://eua.eu/resources/publications/1009:learning-teaching-thematic-peer-groups-2021.html>.

Since many of the basic assumptions about on-campus higher education provision have been challenged over the last years, almost all LDP participants mentioned ongoing reflections at their home institutions on the future of learning and teaching. There was consensus on maintaining **a good balance between the online and on-campus education**, but finding the right way for it is not a simple task. From collectively defining and agreeing on the right terminology (blended, flipped, hybrid, etc) to finding the fit-for-purpose teaching models, digital transformation will probably remain the ongoing grand challenge in the near future. In the meantime, HEIs are under pressure to create capacity around digitalisation.

Key messages - Digitalisation in learning and teaching

- HEIs need to adopt cross-cutting strategies, policies and action plans on digital transformation – which embraces learning and teaching strategies, improving digital skills of staff and students, and enhancing digital infrastructures.
- Regulatory frameworks need to be adjusted to take into account different delivery modes (on site, online, blended).
- An evidence-based approach and data analysis are essential for leading digital transformation in learning and teaching. This also requires a solid understanding and training on cyber-security, ethics in data management, and interoperability of data standards.
- Analysing data and identifying student needs accordingly allow a better planning for student journeys, increase access to education and widen participation in digitally-enhanced learning and teaching.
- Digitalisation has impact on staff workload, in terms of administration, technology support, etc. It has to be properly resourced, so that it does not fall on teachers.

Chapter 3 – Leadership in teaching

When examining the priorities and challenges for learning and teaching (Chapter 2), the LOTUS project explored the concept of leadership in teaching. It defined “leadership in teaching” as both the agency of individuals to develop strategic oversight, coordination and implementation of learning and teaching, as well as the institutional collective capacity to address organisational development towards enhancement. This implies that teaching should be perceived not only as an individual activity, but also as a collective process and responsibility, which requires collaboration and support.

LOTUS has examined the possible meanings of, and conditions for, leadership in teaching – at the level of institutions and higher education systems. The project activities showed that, while leadership in teaching has not (yet) clearly emerged as a topic for discussion and further action in most countries, higher education institution representatives may already identify it as one possible way to catalyse strategic reflection for enhancing learning and teaching.

1. Defining leadership in teaching

As documented by the LOTUS report *National Developments in Learning and Teaching in Europe* (Zhang, 2022), only few systems in Europe are looking into leadership in teaching as a building block of their learning and teaching policies, and organising dedicated initiatives. In most countries, there may be other, more concrete priorities identified (such as establishing learning and teaching centres, or implementing teaching enhancement measures). Moreover, in some EHEA countries, leadership and other staff have manifold responsibilities in planning or organising the education offer in response to system-level regulations and accreditation requirements, resulting into a considerable bureaucratic

workload – which limits the scope of such positions and roles, and makes them unattractive.

Yet, leadership in teaching receives increased attention at HEIs, which may organise dedicated training, measures to support individuals and to reinforce the collective capacity to organise learning and teaching. The *National Developments* report identified two main profiles of leaders in teaching within HEIs, which ideally should be complementary and symbiotic:

- leaders with a specific role in learning and teaching, and related responsibilities (vice-rectors, deans, study programme directors, etc.);
- and particularly active and motivated teachers, or other staff, who contribute proactively to the development of communities of practice in learning and teaching, and to shifting the mindset towards a more reflective, innovative, and research-based practice of teaching.

In other words, leaders in teaching are not only, and not necessarily, to be identified as people with a title and defined responsibility for the education offer. In the context of teaching, leadership responsibilities can be devolved and horizontal (all teachers are peers), and approaches can be fluid, involving communities of teachers or individuals acting as change agents among peers, or student partnerships (where students act as partners and part of these learning communities). To be effective, all these different forms of leadership might benefit from measures for support and training.

In addition to these formal and informal roles of leaders in teaching, the LOTUS LDP used the concept of distributed or shared leadership (van Ameijde et al., 2009). This concept regards leadership as a joint process to which several individual actors

can contribute through interactions, mutual influence and dispersed expertise – an approach that seems to be particularly well-suited for HEIs, and useful when discussing ownership and participatory approaches for enhancing learning and teaching. While shared leadership sounds convincing in theory, the experience in the LOTUS LDP also showed that it proves difficult to implement. For instance, participants to the LDP had difficulties identifying concrete examples of distributed leadership; instead, practices discussed related to decentralised leadership (e.g., faculties or departments bearing responsibilities for learning and teaching), and examples for successful collaboration among colleagues. There might also be some taboo about discussing leadership competences in a context where academic leaders are still *primi/-ae inter pares*.

The following section further examines the complexity of, but also the lessons learnt from LOTUS on leadership in teaching.

2. A complex take-up for leadership in teaching at higher education institutions: lessons learnt from LOTUS

The LDP offered a framework for working on approaches to leadership in teaching through a peer-learning and self-assessment-based methodology (see details in Chapter 1 and Annex 1). Taking as departure point the participating institutions' own strategic plans and priorities, the LDP promoted the use of self-reflection (*What does leading in a learning and teaching context mean?*), through confronting and discussing one's own practices and challenges with other participants. The methodology also aimed to enlarge the self-reflection exercise into an institution-wide conversation at participants' home institutions by involving several members, including students, from one's institution.

A first lesson learnt from this two-year work under the LDP is that **in a shared leadership paradigm, leaders in teaching on different levels might face different kinds of leadership challenges, and therefore need different kinds of support**. In the LDP, one difficulty was that, even with a similar level of seniority and sometimes the same title (vice-rector, director for academic affairs, etc.), some group members had more interest in leadership in teaching than others, who were more interested in specific pedagogical changes. Participants in the second cohort of the LDP (2021-

2022) mostly found that the diversity of profiles was an added value as it reflected the diversity inside their own institution. Thus, the LDP experience provided them a complementary, multifaceted perspective of how to enhance learning and teaching at home, and awareness of the multiple ways to lead in learning and teaching.

The second lesson learnt from the LDP experience is that it **proved useful to apprehend leadership in teaching through specific themes** and related practices (e.g., how to lead change in student-centred learning, staff development, digitalisation, etc.), and through **identifying factors that contribute to leadership in different policies and activities related to learning and teaching**.

Examples for such factors are:

- knowing how to conduct evidence-based decision-making processes within the institution;
- learning and teaching expertise available in the institution, or in the system;
- acquaintance with management approaches and an understanding of how they fit the institution's strategic plans;
- issues related to human resources, or to individual staff members;
- enablers such as communication channels and approaches.

These factors underline the crucial importance of understanding one's own institution, and at times challenging the usual way the institution works: academic leaders, for instance, may have a fine overview of the academic and pedagogical approaches at the institution, yet lack expertise in developing and implementing institutional structures, processes and policies to support such approaches. On the other hand, administrative leaders might be distant from academic discourses and preoccupations, but know how the institution works as an organisation, and what is needed to bring an idea to life. Effective change management and successful leadership would rely on "identifying the power players, hidden champions, secret adversaries, professional opponents and reliable supporters" (Vettori, 2020).³⁰

In this regard, the third lesson learnt is about **communication** – a factor that contributes to leadership in teaching. An effective communication architecture

30 See Appendix 1 on the LOTUS webpage: <https://eua.eu/resources/projects/786-lotus.html>

within an institution needs to go beyond the usual committee and representative structures. While such structures are a substantial and needed part of academic governance cultures, they heavily rely on representatives to pass on information. When designing change projects, an effective communication plan (and not only a dissemination plan) may include creating suitable fora, meeting opportunities and other tailor-made communication structures and processes. In addition, the language needs to be appropriate for the different groups within the institution: **developing vocabularies for issues related to change and leadership that are not overwhelming, easily accepted and taken up at various levels of the institution will be helpful.** Student partnership for developing such vocabularies could be impactful. Terms and concepts need to be carefully translated into the language(s) of the area/discipline/group, and leaders could be sensitised to their possibly different effects on targeted people (Vettori and Loukkola, 2014; Vettori, 2022).

The fourth lesson learnt from the LDP is that HEIs across the EHEA are equally **challenged in finding out how to set their directions and goals in learning and teaching.** Several institutions also pointed to the difficulty in defining an agreed, or at least, not overly conflictual direction for learning and teaching-related policies at institutional level. Related to this issue, implementing newly adopted learning and teaching strategies was also much discussed in the LDP: how to scale up actions and initiatives in a long-term and sustainable perspective, taking into account the “strategy and innovation fatigue” among staff? There cannot be a single answer to these highly complex and context-related questions. Moreover, national and institutional specificities (different organisation and governance models, different levels of autonomy) complexify the direction-setting for change and transformation at HEIs. This could be overcome by channelling “change” through (pilot) projects and new initiatives, combined with a constant dialogue with all stakeholders to agree on what these are intended to achieve. In this regard, institutional and system-level policy-making in learning and teaching would gain from implementing an evidence-based approach, which involves monitoring, assessing, and possibly adjusting experimented approaches, before tackling the question of how to make them sustainable and possibly mainstreamed.

“Institutions have the capacity to work on finding data and evidence, and take decisions based on those to move forward, in a long-term perspective. But the bigger picture on where we all want to go is missing.” (an LDP participant)

What is “evidence” and what does that entail?

In 2019, an EUA Thematic Peer Group worked on evidence-based learning and teaching (EBLT), and coined the following definition: *EBLT concerns connecting learning and teaching to evidence-based methods, strategies and processes, through nurturing a systemic institutional culture that is committed to continuous improvement of student learning.*

Examples of evidence could include, but are not limited to

- Use of cases or models from interdisciplinary or disciplinary literature in pedagogy, didactics and education sciences (used as references or examples of practice);
- Own teaching activities and/or initiatives (possibly through action research or scholarship on teaching and learning);
- Teachers’ self-assessment and performance assessment (e.g., through a teaching portfolio, student evaluation of teaching, or peer evaluations);
- Assessment of student achievement, underpinned by a learning outcome approach (e.g., through student portfolios, or student learning assessment);
- Peer exchanges of observations on teaching initiatives (in the framework of peer mentoring or as part of peer learning in a community of practice in teaching);
- Feedback from various stakeholders in learning and teaching (teachers and their peers, students, alumni, employers), through meetings, surveys or focus groups;
- Quantitative and qualitative outputs from learning analytics.

Importantly, evidence-based approaches should not be understood as adverse to innovation in learning and teaching. On the contrary, they offer a well-founded methodology for innovative pilots or experimentation to foster sustainability. In education sciences literature, evidence-based practices have gained increased attention, as a way to find out to what extent and under which conditions new methodologies in learning and teaching work well, to improve student learning, programme outcomes, and overall quality of learning and teaching at the institutional level.

(Emplit and Zhang, 2019)

3. Resulting recommendations for leadership in learning and teaching

In the final debriefing workshops, participants of the LDP were invited to formulate recommendations for leadership in teaching to their peers at other HEIs. The outcomes can be summarised as follows:

9 PEER-TO-PEER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TAKING UP LEADERSHIP IN TEACHING:

1. Learning and teaching should stand as a central, clear and visible mission of the institution, which, beyond setting out organisational and practical matters, has to be underpinned by an inspirational vision.

Such vision includes commonly shared goals, and an enabling framework that allows staff and students to move together towards achieving the goals. Such vision should also address the relation of institutional change and academic freedom. Leadership is instrumental for defining and implementing such goals through collegial processes, in active participation of students and staff, based on some consensus on educational aims, and with due consideration for academic freedom.

“Leadership is neither about formulating a goal, nor about defining the exact way to reach it: it is about getting people to pursue it jointly... Something historically difficult in most HEIs. Leadership is about setting the frame for others to come in.” (an LDP participant)

“Leadership is not about convincing others. It’s more about an open and critical dialogue where arguments are taken into account. Explanations are more important than convictions.” (an LWG facilitator)

2. Leadership in teaching requires both formal and informal structures for exchange and cooperation – which go beyond combining the usual top-down and bottom-up approaches at institutions.
 - Opportunities for exchanges on learning and teaching are useful, not only at the top-level governance structures, or at the individual teachers’ level, but also any relevant middle-/meso-levels (faculty, department, discipline, etc.), including academic and administrative staff and structures. The institution can play a supportive and enabling role in recognising the value of such informal gatherings.
 - The role of leadership at institutional level is key to instilling a sense of priority and “togetherness”, motivating staff, and ensuring the rollout of strategies and initiatives.
 - Individuals who are not in an official leadership position can be drivers for change.
3. Distributed leadership needs to come along with a clear idea for balanced and efficient decision-making processes. Strategic planning has to be designed in the spirit of co-construction based on a strong sense of transparency and empathy.
4. Leadership in teaching requires time and opportunities for self-reflection. Hence, it is important to create the right atmosphere and opportunities for self-development, creativity, and open and free exchange and sharing. There is a need for empowerment initiatives and mechanisms to decrease workload of staff, who is invited to exercise leadership in teaching.
5. Leadership in teaching implies examining the range of responsibilities and roles for leaders, and identify where improvement can take place, both for supporting individual behaviours and competences as teachers, and for implementing policies and support structures at institutions.

At the institutional level, this would mean reviewing capacity and fitness for purpose of structures and organisation needed to make transformation happen in different areas. These include: decision-making processes and structures, management approaches, human resource policies, communication channels

and strategies, and expertise and capacity for responding to training needs in pedagogy. Addressing these areas will contribute to creating a shared leadership approach, while respecting the institution's organisational culture.

6. There is no single way to demonstrate leadership. Inclusive models and approaches for skills and competence development for leadership in teaching have to be developed and promoted. Differently scaled, complementary support schemes and participatory approaches should enable different types of leaders in teaching to play their role, taking into account diverse individual backgrounds and departure points.
7. Leaders in teaching share a common interest in education, but are also rooted in their academic disciplines, where they may have an important role to play. For some teachers, changing teaching methods and approaches may seem intimidating, if not intrusive. They may need leaders in teaching from their discipline as "models" to instil a sense and showcase examples of how to transform teaching. At institutional strategy level, some flexibility and leeway are needed for faculties and departments to develop their own approaches.
8. A learning and teaching strategy, or the combination of different frameworks and strategies for learning and teaching, could be successfully implemented through growing a series of context-sensitive, practice-sharing events and initiatives throughout the institution. It may be useful, among other things, for gaining a better understanding of workload, and showcasing what implementation would exactly entail to overcome possible resistance to change. Feedback loops and sustainability plans need to be clearly established.
9. In order to transform learning and teaching, leadership in teaching should explore the opportunities of inter-institutional exchange and cooperation. Establishing suitable fora for sharing practice, experience and challenges will prove useful as mind-openers. Broader conversations at national and European levels would also be beneficial.

Chapter 4 – Conclusions and ways forward

The LOTUS project revisited several topics of common interest for the enhancement of learning and teaching, through the lenses of HEIs and in policy dialogues with other types of stakeholders.

The below gathers the key messages from the different chapters to pinpoint the main challenges and as well as routes for overcoming them:

Diverse learners' needs: adapting the educational offer

- The leadership at HEIs should clearly raise discussions, consult the university community, and communicate on the development of flexible learning approaches, in order to achieve a common understanding across the institution. This would help ensure commitment of staff and students.
- A functional student-centred approach requires regular feedback loops in different forms involving students and teachers – from short and regular feedback surveys to large group discussions and focus groups.
- The student body can be heterogeneous, and individuals with their different backgrounds have different needs. This requires evidence-based analysis of who students are. Developing and implementing inclusion and wellbeing strategies can also support reflection on students' needs and complement the development of the educational offer.
- Student-teacher partnership should be valued and considered as indispensable for enhancing teaching. This implies developing student agency and capabilities to actively engage with their learning, valuing their learning process (and not exclusively discipline contents), and providing recognition for their engagement.
- Teachers should be granted sufficient freedom and resources to innovate, regarding methods and approaches, also in response to changing student and labour market needs. They should be given opportunities to learn from existing practices and advice on pedagogical approaches.

Staff development, academic careers and the teaching ecosystem

- Recognising and giving value to teaching is essential. Teaching is an integral part of the academic profession, and should be acknowledged as a scholarly and professional activity. A range of differently scaled and complementary measures, from career paths to incentive systems and professional development offers, should support teaching.
- A holistic view of the professional identity of academics should be developed, so as to take into account their different missions (research, teaching, service to society, administrative duties...) without overburdening them. This requires a reform of academic career paths and assessment towards more parity of esteem for teaching (as compared to research). Such change will take time to be implemented, and lead to change in mindsets. Such policy changes will also require solid monitoring processes, continued support measures, and sustainable approaches and funding beyond pilot projects.
- Teachers' intrinsic motivation to seek the best ways to teach their students has to be nurtured. Lack of time or other constraints may hamper and restrict the use of teaching support, professional development opportunities, and even of funding support. Policy makers and institutions may wish to review existing regulations and available support and funding, with the aim of enabling the most appropriate and fit-for-purpose use of resources.

Inter-institutional collaboration

- Inter-institutional collaboration can be a key enabler and driver for development, quality enhancement, transformation and innovation of learning and teaching.
- Success of inter-institutional collaboration in learning and teaching, whether in national or international setting, heavily depends on how conducive the environments are, as conditioned by system-level frameworks. Funding, multi-stakeholder consultations, collaboration platforms and qualitative metrics are essential for fostering inter-institutional collaboration at the system/national level.
- Trust building, commonly agreed and shared direction, as well as responsive and responsible leadership are key features for ensuring an institution-wide commitment to inter-institutional collaboration.
- The purpose and goals of any inter-institutional collaboration for learning and teaching need to be clearly defined and commonly understood by all who engage with it.
- Students are key participants but also key enablers for inter-institutional collaboration.

Digitalisation in learning and teaching

- HEIs need to adopt cross-cutting strategies, policies and action plans on digital transformation – which embraces learning and teaching strategies, improving digital skills of staff and students, and enhancing digital infrastructures.
- Regulatory frameworks need to be adjusted to take into account different delivery modes (on site, online, blended).
- An evidence-based approach and data analysis are essential for leading digital transformation in learning and teaching. This also requires a solid understanding and training on cyber-security, ethics in data management, and interoperability of data standards.
- Analysing data and identifying student needs accordingly allow a better planning for student journeys, increase access to education and widen participation in digitally-enhanced learning and teaching.
- Digitalisation has impact on staff workload, in terms of administration, technology support, etc. It has to be properly resourced, so that it does not fall on teachers.

Have the pandemic and subsequent swift adaptation in education challenged the usual models of governance and decision-making? Have new processes put in place during the pandemic yielded better results compared to pre-pandemic times? The LOTUS project took place in a time when the post-pandemic future is still uncertain.

It may be too soon to draw final lessons. Participants to the LDP as well as to the policy dialogue workshops repeatedly emphasised that the “new normal” has not yet arrived and only time will tell what it will be like. Yet, it seems certain that the pandemic has definitely contributed to making teaching more visible. Approaches to leadership in teaching, including the recommendations on leadership in teaching under Chapter 3, may be particularly useful in post-pandemic times – when HEIs may wish to assess recent experiences and find the right path for further enhancing learning and teaching.

The very existence of the LOTUS project also confirmed how much fora for open exchanges on learning and teaching are needed. No doubt that, in order to transform learning and teaching, leadership in teaching requires putting a premium on cooperation across HEIs. Enabling conversation and collaboration more systematically at national and European levels would make teachers and students feel part of a community that values education beyond its immediate disciplinary and institutional contexts.

While current policy discussions very much focus on innovative teaching, it is crucial that, instead of delving into ambitious and possibly far too rigid policy agendas, policy makers and higher education authorities review in national systems what could enhance or hamper and prevent the advancement of learning and teaching. Unfit legislations or administrative red-tape in designing and delivering education should be adapted or removed. Appropriate levels of institutional autonomy and capacity building in supporting learning and teaching are key for taking the education agenda further. “Soft” coordination and dialogue between different stakeholders within systems are much needed; devising the right, fit-for-purpose complementarity between existing structures and stakeholders active in learning and teaching is a matter that each system should look into.

Moreover, the LOTUS project confirmed, if still need be, that giving value to, and recognising teaching in academic careers remains a main structural obstacle. Teaching is a professional and scholarly activity; yet academics increasingly face a fragmentation of their professional identity and a multitude of, at times, conflicting demands and duties. This is a core issue for policy makers and institutional leadership to look into, and it is unlikely to be solved easily and quickly.

Finally, the much-welcomed interest from HEIs and other stakeholders alike towards the LOTUS project generally confirm that the conversation on leadership in teaching is not ending, but probably just starting to raise interest within HEIs across the EHEA. The work continues.

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Annex 1 – List of institutions participating in the Leadership Development Programme

Cohort 1 (January – October 2021)

Leadership Working Groups

| Group 1 Facilitator: Alison Farrell, Senior Lead for Sectoral Engagement, National Forum for the Enhancement of T&L, Ireland | Group 2 Facilitator: Simo Kekäläinen, Development Manager, University of Oulu, Finland Replaced by Thérèse Zhang, Deputy Director for Higher Education Policy unit, European University Association | Group 3 Facilitator: Oliver Vettori, Dean for Quality Management and Programme Delivery, WU Wien, Austria | Group 4 Facilitator: Ruben Janssens, Member of the Executive Committee, European Students' Union | Group 5 Facilitator: Ronan Bree, Education Developer, National Forum for the Enhancement of T&L, Ireland |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| University of Bucharest (RO) University of Lausanne (CH) Royal Conservatoire Antwerp (BE) Queen Mary University of London (UK) University of Iceland (IC) University of Eastern Finland (FI) | Ovidius University of Constanta (RO) St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences (AT) University College Cork (IE) University of Agder (NO) University of Silesia in Katowice (PL) Sabancı University (TR) | Tampere University (FI) Université libre de Bruxelles (BE) University of Padova (IT) Tartu School of Health (EE) University of Limerick (IE) | University of Rijeka (HR) Masaryk University (CZ) University of Minho (PT) University of Côte d'Azur (FR) Royal Irish Academy of Music (IE) South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences (FI) | Riga Stradins University (LV) Bournemouth University (UK) Lodz University of Technology (PL) ESMUC Music School Catalonia (ES) University of Jyväskylä (FI) |

Cohort 2 (October 2021 – June 2022)

Leadership Working Groups

| Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 | Group 4 | Group 5 |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <p>Facilitator:</p> <p>Hedda Zechner, Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU Wien), Austria</p> | <p>Facilitator:</p> <p>Claire McAvinia, Educational Developer, National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, and TU Dublin, Ireland</p> | <p>Facilitator:</p> <p>Ruben Janssens, Executive Committee member, European Students' Union (ESU)</p> | <p>Facilitator:</p> <p>Sharon Flynn, Project Manager, Irish Universities Association (IUA)</p> | <p>Facilitator:</p> <p>Gohar Hovhannisyan, Project and Policy Officer, European University Association (EUA)</p> |
| <p>Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft (HTW) Berlin (DE)</p> <p>University of Twente (NL)</p> <p>Wrocław University of Science and Technology (PL)</p> <p>Yaşar University (TR)</p> <p>Sumy State University (UA)</p> | <p>University of Nicosia (CY)</p> <p>Tampere University (FI)</p> <p>Tbilisi State University (GE)</p> <p>Warsaw University of Life Sciences (PL)</p> <p>University of La Laguna (ES)</p> | <p>Eötvös Lorand University ELTE (HU)</p> <p>University of the Arts – Royal Conservatoire, The Hague (NL)</p> <p>University of Gdansk (PL)</p> <p>University of Porto (PT)</p> <p>Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SE)</p> <p>Odessa National I. I. Mechnikov University (UA)</p> | <p>Vienna University of Economics and Business (AT)</p> <p>University of Agribusiness and Rural Development (UARD) (BG)</p> <p>Open University of Cyprus (CY)</p> <p>VID Specialised University (NO)</p> <p>University of Warsaw (PL)</p> | <p>Medical University of Plovdiv (BG)</p> <p>Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences Berlin (DE)</p> <p>Democritus University of Thrace (GR)</p> <p>Kaunas University of Technology (LT)</p> <p>Malmö University (SE)</p> |



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More information:

<https://www.eua.eu/resources/projects/786-lotus.html>