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**REPORT**

**on a HERE Study Visit to Vienna (Austria)**

**Title:** Competence-Based Learning

**Dates:** 9 - 10 September, 2019

**Location:** Vienna (Austria)

**Program and Materials:** [https://supporthere.org/vienna2019/](https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=uk&prev=_t&sl=uk&tl=en&u=https://supporthere.org/vienna2019/)

**Description and key information**

**Participants of the event:** representatives of higher education institutions, European Ministries of Education, HERE team members from neighbouring EU partner countries, representatives of the National Erasmus+ Offices, experts of European countries and partner countries, representatives of the host organization (FH Campus University Wien University of Applied Sciences). In total, about 35 people from 20 countries took part in the event.

From Ukraine participated the associate professor of the Department of Economic Cybernetics, Faculty of Economics, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, **Andriy Stavytskyy,** and State Expert of the Higher Education and Adult Education Directorate, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, candidate of pedagogical sciences, associate professor **Maryna Mruga.**

The two-day seminar was opened by Mr. Arthur Mettinger, Vice-Rector for International Relations at the University of Vienna, who introduced the program, idea and objectives of the seminar.

**The purpose of the event.** The main goal of the event was to familiarize with the institutional practice of competence-based learning, in particular at an Austrian university specializing in applied sciences.

**The main results of the study visit.** The seminar discussed issues of different definition of competence based learning, approaches to formation in different disciplines and curricula.

Accordingly, it was necessary to examine how solving of this issue affects the establishment of the mission and strategy of the institution, the role of stakeholders. An important part was determining the role of assessment in the implementation of competence based learning.

**Work at the seminar**

Work at the seminar was organized in one room with speakers who presented their experience in a competence-based approach to teaching. Also hosting University presented their facilities, in particular the newest simulation environment (described below).

At the beginning A. Mettinger described the structure of the host University, its educational programs, principles of financing. It should be noted that students are learning the seven branches and each of which contains between 11 and 19% of total students. About 7,000 students study at the university in 62 curricula. The university is developing rapidly, as since at the beginning of the millennium there were only 2 study programs. The University belongs to the category of Universities of Applied Sciences, main focus of which contrary to classical universities is on teaching and personal development rather than on sciences and research. There is no doctoral study at the university, which is prohibited for universities in this category, but active research is being conducted on applied nature. For the development of entrepreneurial skills students there is created a so-called startup service. The activities of universities of applied sciences are regulated by separate legislation, universities are "owned" by non-profit associations. An indispensable component of educational programs is mandatory work placement.

Not only the university pays great attention to the creation and development of new curricula, but also to the implementation of the lifelong learning principle. This approach managed to attract to special training programs and courses sufficiently large number of part-time students, which plays a significant role in the financial independence of the institution. Overall, about 60% of the university's budget includes transfers from the federal ministry to prepare a certain number of students, 12% - tuition fees for students, 18% - targeted transfers from the city budget for the preparation of medical students (nurses, physical therapists, medical technicians, etc.), except for doctors that are not educated at universities of applied sciences), 3% - targeted transfers of individual ministries for training staff for them, 7% - revenues from research, 7% - other incomes. Payments from the state are made based on an appropriate formula for each student on a competitive basis (competition between universities for number of funded students).Depending on the specialty, this amount ranges from 5 to 8.65 thousand euros per person per year. In addition, each student pays extra tuition worth 363 euros per semester, foreign student - 725 euros per semester. There is no pure “fee-based” higher education in Austria as in any case major part of costs for educating particular student is covered to university by government of other similar sources. University noted that the payments made by the state at a constant price level, while expenses are increasing, so efficiency issues require to increase the number of students. It should also be noted the new education trend, when companies are beginning to pay for the training of those who will work for them.

University funding depends on the number of students who have successfully completed the program. The institution has an average leaving rate of about 10%. Universities are constantly enrolling 11-12% more students to fulfil the state order than envisaged by the order. Education of such "excessive" students is funded by the university, as they create a reserve for expulsion of academically weak students. A large part of the students are part-time students and distance learning students. The average age of such students is about 30 years. The actual length of training for them can be much higher than the normative one.

The university curriculum is taught exclusively in German, which is a significant obstacle to internationalization. The main focus of the institution is the German labour market. As a result, the institution employs about 2000 people with hourly wages, specialists in the professional field, who teach in their free time. The maximum load of part-timers is 6 hours per week. The contract with such specialists is concluded for one semester. The number of full-time faculty members is 240, the maximum load is 16 hours a week, which is reduced in case of additional work at University. Methodological work (course development, etc.) is not paid additionally on regular basis, but there are available small earmarked grants from the university administration for updating and developing courses, as well as reducing the workload.

The support group for the introduction of new educational program is 4 people: 2 with a scientific degree, 2 with experience in the profession. It should be noted that accreditation is not limited in time.

The main tasks of the university for the next five years are to develop in 5 main areas:

* to digitalize all processes and documents;
* to introduce fully the concept of lifelong learning;
* to introduce innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship, organizational agility;
* to develop the society according to the goals of sustainable development;
* to extend internationalization.

During the seminar, the most modern simulation laboratory for the training of health care students (e.g. nurse students, medical technicians) was presented to the participants. It consisted of operation theatre and resuscitation wards. The lab was funded by the city budget, the equipment is up-to-date (more modern than in most clinics), leased, not owned, allowing it to be updated as needed. The laboratory is used by several universities.

The results of a preliminary survey of the participants in the seminar indicated that the introduction of competency based learning is a strategic priority in 21 countries out of 25 represented in the event. However, there is often a terminological confusion between the concepts of skill and competence. As a result, it is difficult to make methodological recommendations for the implementation of competence-based training in practice.

At the event, a discussion was held on which philosophy of teaching is crucial for the successful development of the university. Different options have been proposed, but it has been noted that for each area its tools are important and therefore there can be no single approach. Also, it is worth noting that reporters failed to demonstrate how to measure and test competences in different areas. The only exceptions were training programs developed in the medical field, which have clear rules and criteria for achieving learning outcomes for each competency.

It was noted that young people often lose their motivation during long-term studies, so there is a trend to transfer all materials not just to the online form, but to the form of working with smartphone application. Experiments in the curriculum of computer science confirmed the effectiveness of reducing material and its application in mobile form.

It has been pointed out that there is a paradigm shift in the universities of the world: there is a transition from teaching to learning, which requires the development of a new assessment system, the development of a new class of didactic materials.

**Conclusions**

Overall, the seminar showed that there are differences in countries in understanding the competency approach, measuring learning outcomes, formulating similar development strategies in the context of both globalization and the risk of regionalization. In particular, it was noted that only 15% of students have the opportunity to participate in academic mobility, which requires the creation of a new class of mobility – virtual one, based on online technologies. It is also worth pointing out the further growth of the role of the so-called part - time students, who will in some cases the budget basis of the modern university. To realize such a plan, it is necessary to implement the real lifelong learning system at Ukrainian universities.

**Photos from the seminar**

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