

# LEARNING OUTCOMES AND STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING

The seminar focused on learning outcomes and student-centered learning took place on 18-19 April 2016 at the University of Tallinn in Estonia. The participants, Higher Education Reform Experts from different countries of Europe, Asia and Africa took an active part in this considerable event. Turkmenistan was represented by Izmailov Batyr. First, it is necessary to clarify and define what «Learning outcomes and student-centered learning»

means. SCL (student-centered learning) was created as a concept within the field of educational pedagogy and has been a topic of discussion within many higher education institutions and within national policy-making fora over the past few decades. Whilst the concept of student-centered learning in its most recent form is relatively new, the idea of looking at the way in which teaching is conducted and how learning processes work has spanned over almost two centuries. Discussion of student-centered learning initially focused on changes of the pedagogical methods used and in making learning and educational processes more flexible, in order for students to participate as much as possible. Student-centered learning environments have been shown to be effective in higher education. They have been defined specifically within higher education as both a mindset and a culture within a given educational institution and as a learning approach broadly related to, and supported by, constructivist theories of learning. They are characterized by innovative methods of teaching which aim to promote learning in communication with teachers and other learners and which take students seriously as active participants in their own learning and foster transferable skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and reflective thinking. The revised European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, due to be approved by the ministers of European higher education in May 2015, include the following passage on student-centered learning: «Institutions should ensure that programs are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.»

Student-centered learning, also known as learner-centered education, broadly encompasses methods of teaching that shift the focus of instruction from the teacher to the student. In original usage, student-centered learning aims at developing learner's autonomy and independence by putting responsibility for the learning path in the hands of students. Student-centered instruction focuses on skills and practices that enable lifelong learning and independent problem-solving. Student-centered learning theory and practice are based on the constructivist



learning theory that emphasizes the learner's critical role in constructing meaning from new information and prior experience. Student-centered learning puts students' interests first, acknowledging student voice as central to the learning experience. In a student-centered classroom, students choose what they will learn, how they will learn, and how they will assess their own learning. This is in contrast to traditional education, also dubbed «teacher-centered learning», which situates the teacher as the primarily «active» role while students take a more «passive», receptive role. In contrast, student-centered learning requires students to be active, responsible participants in their own learning and with their own pace of learning.

Usage of the term «student-centered learning» may also simply refer to educational mindsets or instructional methods that recognize individual differences in learners. In this sense, student-centered learning emphasizes each student's interests, abilities, and learning styles, placing the teacher as a facilitator of learning for individuals rather than for the class as a whole. So, we may conclude that SCL is practical and achievable, as well as being highly beneficial for learners.

Finally, we have to emphasize that Learning Outcomes are goals that describe how a student will be different because of a learning experience. More specifically, learning outcomes are the knowledge, skills, approaches, experience, attitudes, and habits of mind that students take with them from a learning experience. Learning outcomes are defined by the Curriculum Committee. Program Learning Outcomes should be defined through a strategic planning process to align with the divisions' learning outcomes and strategic plan.

As for the seminar, on the whole, the work was organized at top level thanks to a well co-ordinated work of the SPHERE team. The experts got the opportunity of sharing their own experience with the colleagues and listening to the presentations delivered by the foreign partners. They could make a joint analysis of the actual situation in the given sphere. The experts worked actively in the groups, having discussed many actual problems concerning learning outcomes and student-centered learning. The most important points at the seminar were learning outcomes and student-centered learning, how they have been developed and implemented in different disciplines, how they have challenged and changed the institutions and their members, the role of collaboration with external stakeholders (employers, industry, partner institutions), the interplay of institution and higher educational system (the role of the ministry, rector, conference, national quality assurance agency and national qualifications framework). One can say with certainty that all the aims of the seminar have been achieved. The organizers and participants have done much work. It is necessary to mention that we got the opportunity to participate in such important and considerable seminars thanks to the educational policy of our esteemed President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. We must continue our work for the benefit of our motherland and people, realizing the initiatives of our esteemed President into life.

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