

EVALUATION OF THE TEACHING STAFF: PENDING SUBJECT

1st Sept. – 2nd Sept.

INTRODUCTION:

On the 1st and 2nd of September 2016, Unibasq held its first Summer Course under the title “Evaluation of the Teaching Staff: Pending subject”.

The place elected for the venue was Miramar Palace in San Sebastian, and was attended by speakers from the European Commission, Cambridge University, Université de Pau et des Pays de L’Adour, UPV/EHU, Universidad de Deusto, and Mondragon Unibertsitatea, in an event that went over the development of teaching staff evaluation since its first implementation to the present days, and described the key reluctances faced and the impact achieved.

One of the highlights of the venue was the presentation by Endika Bengoetxea (UPV/EHU), who analysed tools and measuring indicators for quality assurance in the teaching activity in the rankings.

[Programme of the presentations.](#)

OBJECTIVES:

1. Analyse systems, evidences and indicators used for measuring the quality of the teaching staff at university, both in Europe, and in the Basque University System.
2. Reflect on the convenience, viability, and efficiency of the evaluation systems for the teaching activity, offering steps for improvement.
3. Identify indicators and evidences to measure teaching activity in international university rankings, and how they are compiled.
4. Know experiences and results of the innovation activities in education in order to promote it.

[“¿Qué, cómo y para qué medir la docencia?”](#)

- **Eva Ferreira García – Director of Unibasq**

Having defined what is education, what is knowledge, and what are teachers, Eva Ferreira described the traditional teaching system, and explained how some teachers defied the traditional constrictions with their innovative methodologies but failed to change the institutions.

Ferreira explained that Bologna established institutional objectives that included professional orientation, generic basic competences embedded in a comprehensive education that allowed job market integration, not excluding the traditional system but adding the development of a new methodology that promotes autonomous learning.

She later pointed out that in 2008 The Council and The European Parliament approved the European Qualification Frame for permanent learning, showing the efforts of the universities to improve the teaching activity. Results from this frame prove that the best universities show similarities, but those not quite so good develop at different paces, concluding that objectives are specific, and aspiration towards excellence in each and every field does not exist.

DOCENTIA programme set the foundations of the evaluation of the teaching staff, understanding the process as an internal evaluation of the universities to guarantee that teachers are meeting the objectives of the subjects they teach, a process that requires coordination, planning, and development of the subject, and students' learning process evaluation through self-reports by Academic Heads and student opinions, introducing the figure of the external evaluator.

In spite of the great difficulties in passing collective and individual measures, Eva Ferreira concluded that it is better to measure with a certain degree of error, than not measuring at all, and that teacher evaluation is on the right track, as the final goal of evaluation is for teachers to be passionate about their job, be acknowledged, and make the best of their teaching-time.

The second presentation went under the title:

[“Herramientas e indicadores de medición de la calidad de la actividad docente en los rankings”](#)

- **Endika Bengoetxea – European Committee. Expert in Higher Education, former GM Education and Culture, European Commission.**

Bengoetxea's presentation set forth that there is not one single definition of what is quality in teaching and stated the growing demand for accountability and transparency springing from an increase in competitiveness amongst institutions.

In an attempt to establish the essential elements that define quality in teaching, the presenter explained that it is a combination of the skills and attitudes of a teacher, the context, the cultural and traditional aspects, and the institutional frame and organisational context.

On the methodology to measure quality, Bengoetxea mentioned student surveys - although he showed a certain caution as in his opinion they may lead to the adoption of certain measures in the short run that are not totally beneficial – in-class peer evaluations focused on the process more than in the outcome, and about which he feels that they may produce self-indulgence, and finally he suggested that research may somehow be considered an indicator of quality, although he was aware of the difficulties some institutions with a high research profile show when evaluating teaching profiles.

Bengoetxea's key point was the use of rankings and ratings to establish teaching quality in centres; he began with an explanation of what is a ranking and what is a rating; while rankings compare universities according to different indicators, calculating the position by grouping several aspects under one indicator, ratings measure the performance in different areas as established in certain standards.

According to Bengoetxea, rankings cover just 3-5% of universities, and the indicators used to establish them are only applicable to elitist institutions and are limited by certain biases such as the subjects analysed, or the language in which they are taught, although he informed that in Shanghai ranking indicators such as quality in teaching is being taken into consideration as opposed to the traditional research activity only.

He also mentioned the characteristics of the most recognised rankings such as THE (Times Higher Education), Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), Thomson Reuter Global Institution Profiles Project, U-Multirank, or the aforesaid Shanghai Ranking.

The following conclusions on the indicators for teaching quality in rankings were presented:

- Reputation surveys favour institutions already well-known.
- Performance indicators are already quantifiable and available, but do not prove teaching quality in the centres accurately.
- Student/teacher ratios do not prove pedagogical quality in the learning environment, what may lead to errors in measuring quality.
- Drop-out rates may produce difficult to read data.
- Employability is a job-market-dependent data, for which universities can not be held accountable in economic crisis times.

Putting an end to his presentation, Bengoetxea foresaw a growing number of universities that will require from their teaching staff proof of their teaching skills and competences.

After the pause, the course resumed activity with the presentation:

“Sistema de Evaluación Docente (desempeño docente- teaching performance) en la Universidad de Cambridge”

- **Albertina Albors Llorens – Law Faculty Cambridge University, University Reader in European Union Law, Fellow and Head of Law Studies St. John’s College.**

After going over the structure of Cambridge University that is made of a central administrative body (Rectorate, Vice-rectorate, and administrative services), constituent states (responsible for the degrees they teach), and 31 colleges that select the degree students, appoint Study Heads that are in charge of the academic progress of students, and tutors for each of their students.

The university is in charge of assuring quality in teaching through a University General Board Educational Committee, backed by an internal control mechanism based on teaching-learning strategic plans aimed at attracting high-profile students both from an academic and research background, and support them to become leaders in their field of knowledge. Coordination mechanisms between faculties and colleges, such as making the main tutor responsible for the academic guidance of the college and its academic performance. Internal control measures for the University General Board such as evaluations of all faculties and departments with regards to teaching every six years and backed by external committees from other faculties and other universities, what has proved to be very rigorous, but not very constructive.

In terms of dissemination of the information, Albors considers that there are good communication paths between teachers and students, and that the existing information about evaluation criteria is clear and accessible.

As for incentive policies for excellence in teaching, Albors explained that there are specific awards to acknowledge excellence in a career, for which student surveys are taken into consideration.

The presenter described as well the incorporation process of new teachers, explaining that they are provided with mentoring, their permanence being feasible after a period of over three years during which they must receive satisfaction questionnaire results over 3.5 in a scale of 1-5.

On external quality control, she said that Cambridge receives frequent visits from professional colleges, having to answer any suggestions received, together with visits from QAA every six years, what promotes Improvement Action Plans to answer the recommendations, and which are endorsed by the Higher Education Academy as a supporter.

Once Albertina Albors’s turn was over, the next presentation was about the evaluation of the teaching performance in France, in a session under the title:

“Sistema de evaluación de la actividad docente en Francia”

- **Jean-Michel Uhaldeborde – Université de Pau et de Pays de L’Adour. Member of the Advisory Board of Unibasq**

Uhaldeborde began his presentation saying that the greatest challenge in the implantation of teaching evaluation in France was to overcome distrust from teachers, as there was no tradition of evaluation in France.

After having established the historical background, he mentioned that research activities have been favoured by national evaluation institutions, and that the main reasons for the current reticence could be grouped in ideological apprehension that suspects that the final goal of evaluation is a market evolution of universities, corporatist mistrust that doubts the legitimacy of being evaluated by students, and ignorance of what to expect from evaluation and its repercussion in the teaching activity, defending quality based on a refusal to sacrifice content to format.

Nevertheless, Uhaldeborde found areas of convergence should evaluation be based on pedagogical aspects only, be carried out in a decentralised manner, periodical, and provided the negative results be informed in a private way to the teachers concerned.

Regarding implementation, he explained that the most relevant steps taken so far have been the creation of the ODEC (Student Observatory) and the appointment of a Vice-rector devoted to the evaluation of the teaching activity.

He concluded that assured academic legitimacy, stable methodologic adaptability and strategic utility must be reached, although he feels that this last one is already under correct development.

After the lunch break, the session reopened with a round table on the topics proposed throughout the day, in which the speakers and attenders stated their points of view.

On the 2nd of September, the first session was conducted by representatives of the three universities in the Basque University System; UPV/EHU, Universidad de Deusto, and Mondragon Unibertsitatea.

“Buenas prácticas desarrolladas por las universidades del Sistema Universitario Vasco (SUV)”

- **[Susan Orbe Mandaluniz \(UPV/EHU\)](#)**
- **[Gloria Zaballa Pérez \(Universidad de Deusto\)](#)**
- **[Jon Altuna Iraola \(Mondragon Unibertsitatea\)](#)**

Susan Orbe began contextualising and describing the characteristics of UPV/EHU, with the intention of highlighting the impact of DOCENTIAZ, a programme that started in 2010 and implemented in Spanish universities in 2015, had in the improvement of teaching quality.

She explained that DOCENTIAZ is a structure that includes teachers, quality committees, and students, and that has brought about the implementation of new procedures, such as updates in applications and subjects, training courses for evaluators, orientation courses, reflection and

data analysis periods, follow-up report writing from Unibasq and/or ANECA, report publishing in webpages, and above all, agreements for improvement or modification.

Thanks to all these processes, certain strengths, weaknesses and objectives for the future. She underlined amongst the strengths: the support to Management Teams, the implication of the evaluators, and the coordination of the services. About the weaknesses that she pointed out, she mentioned that it is difficult to support the process, due to the limited number of cases to evaluate, the meagre participation of alumni, the doubt about whether incentives should be quantitative or qualitative, and the stillness of the evaluation process.

Finally, Orbe emphasised the need to bank for a programme at institutional level and a progressive evaluation that must be followed up.

Gloria Zaballa from Universidad de Deusto was the next speaker, in a presentation that went over the situation of the centre she represented, saying that the greatest change experienced was the implementation of a more autonomous and significative learning process for students, based on competences, that will propitiate an improvement of both social and professional life in each degree.

She also introduced the concept European Credit, that allows us to understand that planning is done from the perspective of students, and not based on the number of hours spent, but on the productivity, responsible dedication, and the achievements in terms of competence.

With this new pedagogical framework, a redefinition of the role of teachers and tutors must be done, becoming organisers, facilitators, motivators, evaluators, coordinators, and, above all, leaders.

This change also brings about a redefinition of the teaching process, which was explained with a Map of Processes.

On Design and Planning, Zaballa explained that teachers must provide a learning guide for students, different from the teaching programme.

Learning management requires a greater attention from students: management of the external practicum, student mobility, together with attention to suggestions and appeals.

Both surveys and evaluation reports are taken into consideration when evaluating teaching activity, what results in a continuous improvement based on learning evaluation and satisfaction degree of the students, coordinating different subjects and the global degree of satisfaction with teachers.

As a final conclusion, Zaballa said that “The evaluation of the teaching activity has become a key point in the enhancement of the teaching-learning process, and in the continuous improvement of degrees, centres, and universities”.

The last speaker of the session was Jon Altuna, from Mondragon Unibertsitatea, whose university has a de-centralised self-managed model, defined as a cooperative governance system.

Altuna introduced a performance evaluation system in which each assignment is accompanied by an identification of the improvement areas as a driving force for transformation of the culture in the faculty.

He also spoke about the relationships built between students and teachers, the multi-disciplinary approach, the changes in the roles of teachers and students that have made students protagonists of their learning processes, and teachers escorts in these processes.

About the continuous evaluation of competences, and the interdisciplinary approach of the learning process, he said that they are well-rooted in the philosophy of the centre, and commented that for the DOCENTIA Programme, and the half-yearly evaluation focused on the improvement of the teaching activity, follow-up meetings (Hobetaldeak) are held, their outcomes being incorporated in the Management Plan of the following school year.

Along the same lines, a yearly professional development follow-up meeting is held, with the intention of guiding teachers in the strategic dimensions and activities to develop and fixating the professional development objectives.

An evaluation of the performance for retributive and promotional purposes is carried out every two years, supporting and internally promoting the consolidation of professionals.

Altuna closed his presentation saying that the model for teaching evaluation in Mondragon Unibertsitatea stands out for its team work and leadership, innovation, qualitative evaluation, student participation in the teaching evaluation process, and its evaluation system divided in knowledge fields.

The second presentation of the day offered the perspective of students on how to evaluate, in a session presented by students from the Basque university system, and a guest from Universidad de Lleida.

“La visión del alumnado respecto a la evaluación de la actividad docente”

- **Gemma Espigares Tribó – Doctorate Student at Universidad de Lleida**
- **Iker Martín Pesado – Student at UPV/EHU**
- **Aitor Marañón Loidi – Student at Universidad de Deusto**
- **Naiara Campo Alba – Student at Mondragon Unibertsitatea**

The group of students offered a reflexion on why and how to evaluate, although they came to the conclusion that the greatest challenge was lack of answer in certain cases.

They also highlighted that surveys do not cover questions that go into depth in certain topics that concern students, such as the pace of the syllabus, the linguistic competence of the teacher in the language in which the subject is taught, or the adequacy of the demeanour of the teacher.

Students also manifested that a number of crucial factors that affect the data collected are not taken into consideration when presenting the surveys, more specifically; items about

evaluation should be presented at the end of the programme, and the way in which questions are written makes understanding of their intentionality unclear.

They also pointed out that students should be made aware of the importance of their participation in surveys, and the finality of them, and mentioned that doing them online and not in the classroom, diminishes participation in addition to decontextualization from the university frame.

As an improvement proposal, students mentioned the addition of a qualitative assessment, and a comments section in surveys.

After a brief pause, a workshop was conducted by Victoria Bascones from Euskalit.

“Taller de Innovación Docente”

- **Victoria Bascones – Euskalit. Advanced Management Technician.**

Putting an end to the summer course 2016, a very different topic was presented in the closing session, and related to innovation:

“RSAIT: acercando el robot NAO a la empatía”.

- **Elena Lazkano – Aggregated Teacher at UPV/EHU**
- **Igor Rodríguez – Research Intern at UPV/EHU**
- **Aitzol Astigarraga – Doctorate Student at UPV/EHU**

The work group presented an innovation that brought the audience closer to the scientific and technological advances that can be expected in the near future, as global quality increases in the Basque University System. For this, they introduced NAO, a robot able to produce poetry.