Policy Paper

“Quality of Teaching”

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The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) recognises the relationship between the quality of teaching shown by the educator and the level of student participation and overall engagement and enjoyment of the learning process. This policy paper is the outcome of consultations with OBESSU Member Organisations, work by the Quality of teaching Working Group, and consultations with OBESSU’s partners.

Introduction

It is often the case that qualified teachers do not equal quality teaching. Teacher training is not standardised across European countries and this leads to the quality of teaching fluctuating from country to country, and also, at times, from school to school and from teacher to teacher. OBESSU believes that all students should have access to quality education and that their teachers should be engaging in Continuous Professional Development (CPD). Since the initial training of teachers often does not include pedagogical and empathetic aspects of the teaching profession to a large enough extent, and instead can be mostly constructed of subject knowledge. OBESSU believes that these pedagogical and empathic aspects are at least as important as subject knowledge in teacher training.

Initial training of teachers

It is hugely important that the initial training of teachers is not simply made up of subject knowledge and that it includes things such as social-emotional skills to help engage and empathise with their students. For students to be able to learn in a safe and inclusive environment, it is important that teachers are trained in areas like trust, intercultural and group management, conflict mediation and mentorship. Quality teaching takes into account that all learners learn differently, and teachers should have the tools to teach diverse groups of students. This includes understanding how to use and actively implementing the use of formal and nonformal pedagogical methods and versatile materials. OBESSU believes that teachers should have practical, in-school teaching, where they are given the chance to experience different kinds of schools and how they operate, this will allow for a balance between practice and theory. OBESSU calls for the addition of these areas to the teacher training process, throughout Europe. This training will lead to ensuring that there is an emphasis put on the emotional development of students at both secondary and tertiary levels. The initial training of teachers is the thing that will shape their careers and views on
teaching, it is therefore essential that, during this initial training, teachers are trained in how to foster student participation.

**Therefore OBESSU demands:**

- In the initial training of teachers, social-emotional skills are made a priority.
- Teachers in training are tested on their ability to empathise with their students.
- Teachers are given training in conflict mediation.
- Teachers are given sensitivity training.
- Teachers are trained in fostering student participation.
- Initial training includes versatile pedagogical methods including non-formal methods.

**Professional development and quality of teaching**

School students are constantly changing and developing, it is vital that teachers are equipped to keep up with these changes and meet the needs of their students. CPD allows for teachers to continuously grow and expand their mindset to reflect the changing world around them. CPD allows for teachers to learn new teaching methods and techniques, such as the facilitation of peer learning. The cost of CDP creates a barrier for teachers, as they are often expected to cover costs and transport on a personal level, this can dissuade teachers from engaging in CPD as it can come at a personal cost to the teacher.

**Therefore OBESSU demands:**

- Teachers engage in regular CPD.
- The cost of CPD be funded by the state to encourage participation.
- Teacher CPD will include areas such as facilitating peer learning and sensitivity training.
- Student participation as an overarching principle in CPD.

**Quality of teaching and student participation**

It is true to say that there is not often much mention of student participation in teacher training, particularly for teachers who may have been trained years ago. The ability to foster student participation and engagement is a critical skill that teachers should possess. This is a skill that teachers can gain through CDP and pedagogical training. Students and teachers should form a partnership in the learning process with students having the opportunity to give feedback to their teachers and having the space to contribute their opinions to the creation of the curriculum. High levels of student participation can also encourage teachers to continuously self-evaluate and improve their teaching style.

**Therefore OBESSU recommends**

- Student feedback is encouraged by teachers.
Students are given the opportunity to express their opinions and thoughts on the curriculum

Students and teachers create a partnership where they can work together to better the learning and teaching experience for both parties.

Cooperation with Teachers/Trade Unions

When teachers and students work together, a learning environment that is best for everyone can be created. Looking at this on a national level, when school student unions work together with the national teachers’ unions and trade unions in their country, this can help to create an idea of how quality teaching should look and make a standardised image of this across the national school system. Opening up this idea of cooperation with teachers’ unions and trade unions allows also for future cooperation on other topics and areas.

Therefore OBESSU recommends:

- OBESSU Member Organisations work together with the national teachers’ unions and trade unions in their country on ensuring quality of teaching
- Teachers unions and trade unions work with their national student unions so that student voice is evident in their education.