

Laurent Leduc and Dominique Verpoorten

IFRES - University of Liège, Quartier Urbanistes 1, Traverse des Architectes 5B - 4000 Liège

Session Title: **Ten years of pedagogical training sessions for faculties teaching freshmen**

Proposal Type: Concurrent Assessed Institutional Initiative Proposal

Session Topic: Curriculum and Teaching

Date and Time: Sunday, February 12, 2017 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Session Abstract: Created at the University of Liège (Belgium) in 2006, the CDS - IFRES offers to all the new faculties and teaching assistants the opportunity to participate to a pedagogical training program dealing with a wide range of themes exclusively related to the enhancement of teaching activities for first-year students. More than 1400 staffs have already attended to those sessions in which dissemination of good practices in the first-year course takes a large part. Leading a reflective analysis of the process of this program and its outcomes through various data, this communication offers great insights for conceptors of faculty training programs.

Detailed Summary: At the University of Liège (ULg) in Belgium since 2006, a pedagogical training program lead by the *Centre de Didactique Supérieure* (or CDS) is focusing on various issues specifically related to teaching first-year students. Prescribed by the so-called Bologna decree, the CDS has indeed been established with the mandate to « support, counsel and train staffs in charge of first-year students » (article 83) and has been created as an integral part of the *Institute of Training and Research in Higher Education* (IFRES) of the ULg since inception. Initially unique and optional for its first two years, this program has since then become part of a larger catalog of more than 60 different pedagogical training sessions (dealing with any kind of higher education issues) designed - and made compulsory - for any new faculty and teaching assistant enrolled at the University. Within this catalog, the CDS training activities can be clearly identified by staffs in charge of freshmen, since all their titles are dealing with one of four predefined categories of themes related to the enhancement of first-year experience in class according to the literature :

- themes dealing with typical difficulties and deficiencies experienced by first-year students - with presentation of remediation strategies for teachers - (ex : Increasing motivation of first-year students ; Increasing the mastery of crucial academic prerequisites by first-year students...);
- themes dealing with innovative teaching methods recommended in order to support freshmen perseverance and success (ex : Developing formative feedbacks and Assessment for Learning practices for freshmen ; Supporting and managing peer learning activities in first-year classrooms...);

- themes dealing with didactics of disciplines taught in multiple Schools or Faculties (ex : Teaching mathematics to first-year students ; Teaching Biology to first-year students...);
- themes dealing basic teaching skills and practices reconsidered in the context of first-year courses (ex : Writing course syllabi adapted to first-year students ; Defining expectations and workloads adapted to freshmen...).

Constituting a yearly program of six different face-to-face seminars (lasting three and a half hours and whose themes are renewed every year), the CDS training sessions all follow a specific pattern based on the dissemination of good practices. Indeed, in order to illustrate the theme of each session, three to four professors from different faculties of the university are invited to present a related teaching experience (followed by a theoretical presentation) known for their quality or relevance for first-year students.

Evidence of Assessment:

Using different kind of observations and data, this communication assesses various dimensions and outcomes of the CDS pedagogical training program for teachers in charge of first-year students after ten years of activity and 56 different sessions organized. We will first have a look at the total number of participants (1426) and will analyze their distribution through our four predefined categories of themes related to the enhancement of First-year experience. Then, the results of a survey led through systematic questionnaires submitted to the participants at the end of each session will be presented, allowing us to insist on the positive and negative points they have stressed during the last five years. Secondly, we will focus on the numbers and profiles (in terms of disciplines, faculties or schools they are from) of the professors invited to showcase examples of good practice related to a given theme. Since all of their 284 presentations were filmed and made available online on the CDS website, two short video montages (with English subtitles) taken from that material will be shown and commented since they deal with three of our research preoccupations : the state of mind of a faculty who have been ‘championed’ within the academic community ; their perceived benefits of preparing and delivering such a communication ; and the public expressions of the way they perceive their teaching missions.

Implications for Institutional Improvement or Advancement:

Three different types of stakeholders of the CDS pedagogical training program have taken decisions or actions likely to impact positively on first-year students learning, development or success: the ULg authorities, the staffs attending to the CDS sessions, and the teachers invited to showcase examples of good practice in this context.

First, the authorities of the University of Liège have maintained their support to the CDS and its training program by renewing its funding year after year during the whole decade. Secondly, as a consequence of the expertise gained by the CDS through its training activities, the authorities have also facilitated and funded its new consulting project « Feedbacks 1st Year », which was developed in four faculties of the Institution (Applied Sciences, Law, Sciences and Architecture) and allowed the improvement and the re-engineering of various teaching and assessment practices in more than 25 different first-year courses for the benefit of their students. Throughout the years, more and more participants of the CDS training

sessions have also described the kind of regulations they had brought to their teaching as a result of their attendance to those activities related to specific subjects. Those testimonies were recorded in the reflective report they were asked to produce at the end of their compulsory training. Consequently, several former participants were invited to become speakers during further CDS sessions.

Finally, it is really interesting to mention how many professors invited to deliver a communication dealing with pedagogical issues in front of their peers in a CDS training session have insisted - during their speech - on the fact that this event in itself had brought them to improve or even re-design specific aspects of their teaching in order to enhance the first-year experience.
