



# Student-Centred Learning

## A toolkit for students, staff and HEI

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# European Students' Union (ESU)

An umbrella organisation of 45 national unions of students from 38 countries in Europe representing more than 11 million students in higher education policy making on the European level

# 1 INTRODUCTION

- Student-Centered Learning as a concept revolves around modern grand challenges
- It is not a new understanding of learning, but renewed through improved knowledge about learning

## 2 CONCLUSIONS

- Student-Centred Learning is a way for preserving democracy in a marriage of liberal values of market and society
- Fortunately, we have never been as ready before, but gargantuan steps are needed

### 3 MAKING LIFE BETTER?

We have more information and data about everything and anything (economy, higher education) and it is more accessible than ever before (constant state of history if observed at present)

## 4 OR MORE COMPLICATED?

Today – most reliable sources of information for all of us, especially youth, are probably user-driven portals (or apps)

Yet, access to information does not only depend on the ability to absorb the facts. Not to mention that also access to (equal quality) internet in general is still an issue.

# 5 DEMOCRATISATION OF INFORMATION



## 5 DEMOCRATISATION OF INFORMATION?

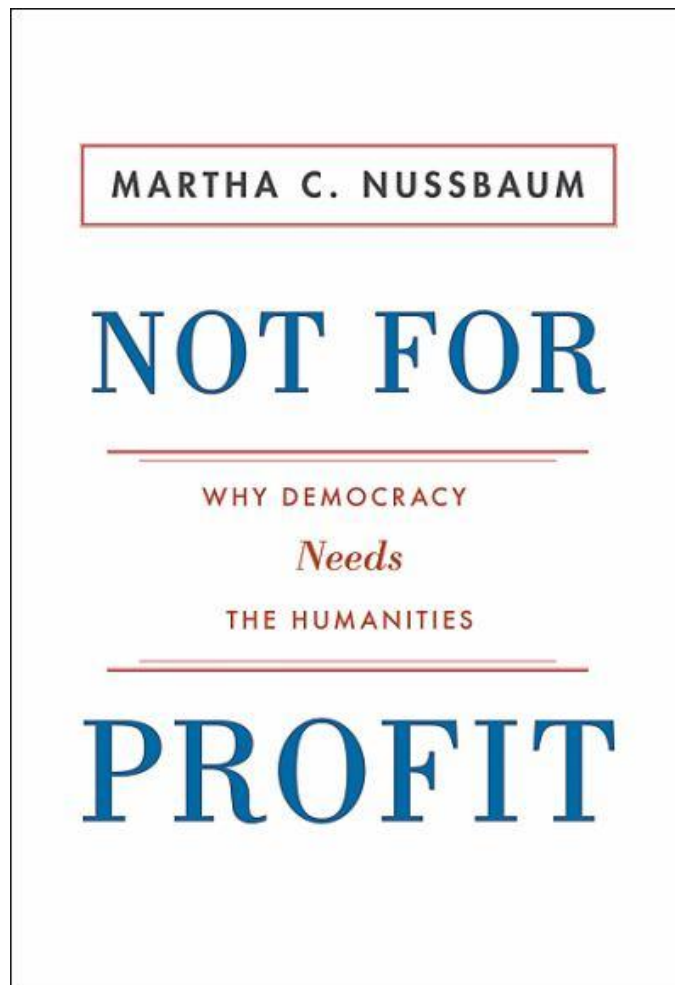
- How do we equip people to seek information, be critical towards the source(s) and make meaningful use of it? Especially where there is overflow and clutter. Life used to be so simple.



# 5 DEMOCRATISATION OF INFORMATION

We hear so much about crises in economy and politics, but Martha Nussbaum highlights that there is indeed an ongoing crisis so deep and much more threatening in the long term, that goes largely unnoticed – a worldwide crisis in education.

## 6 SILENT CRISIS



Admiration to  
Socratic argument is  
being lost in modern  
schools and  
universities,  
depraving our  
societies from  
pursuing any  
freedom in the long  
run

## 6 SILENT CRISIS

Nussbaum speaks about progress made by thinkers and practitioners like Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Alcott, Mann, Dewey and Tagore – all linked to Socratic thinking.

## 6 SILENT CRISIS

- Regurgitation is the fashion of learning despite two centuries of progress, despite the fact that mass education system puts new strains to the system that should exactly avoid rote learning
- Learning is seen as something profitable for economy though we often don't realise that modern democratic state is based on the need to have citizens who are politically literate

# 7 EMPOWERMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

- Self-taught and self-guided learners in a supportive environment that does not neglect the importance of play just like children who learn sympathy and reciprocity of human relations through imagination – this is why it is crucial for to have liberal arts approach in curriculum for all – focus on something we might hear as transversal skills

# 8 RESPONSIBILITY



## 9 POWER TO THE PEOPLE?

But, students have different backgrounds and different experiences. And now they also command their own world of information. And yet we still expect most of them to conform to 19<sup>th</sup> century expectations of economy?

Higher education (qualification) is no longer a guarantee for a lifetime employment or a higher income or for better satisfaction with life (if that ever has been the case anyway)

# 10 EMPATHY AS CENTRAL





## 11 THREAT

Modes of actual learning are dangerously distant from the expectations of (mass) education systems, thus stratification will be favoured (by the systems)

# 12 WISEST PEOPLE FOLLOW THEIR OWN DIRECTION...

Gathered in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve in 2009, ministers agreed that

*Striving for excellence in all aspects of higher education, we address the challenges of the new era. This requires a constant focus on quality.*

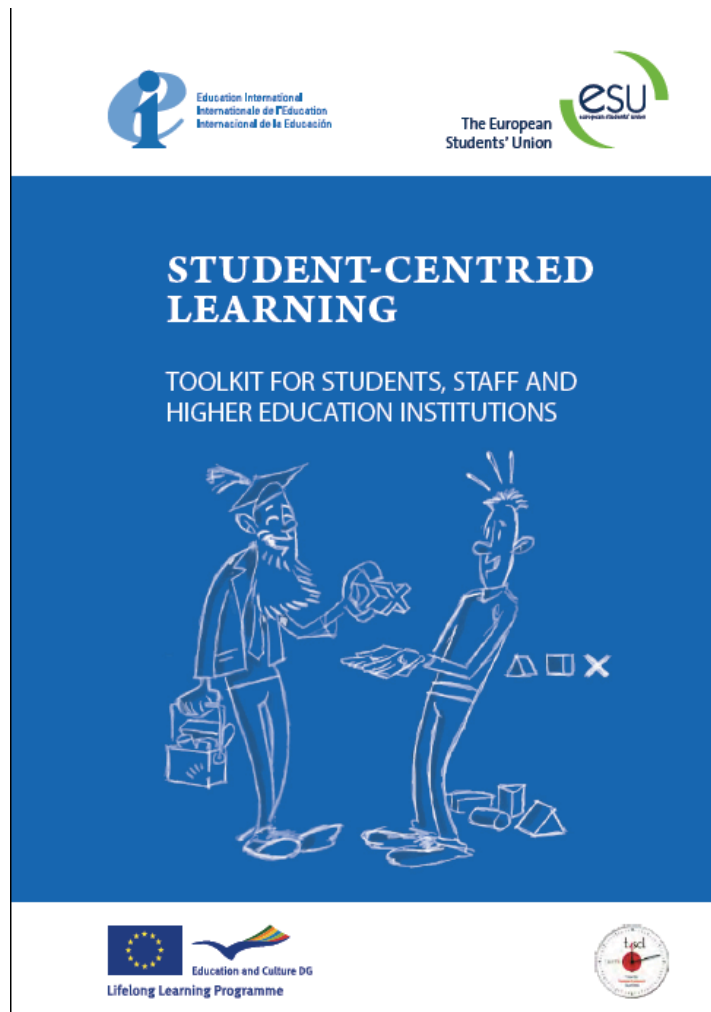
## 12 GETTING WISER...

- *We reassert the importance of the teaching mission of higher education institutions and the necessity for ongoing curricular reform geared toward the development of learning outcomes.*

## 12 AND WISER...

- *Student-centred learning requires empowering individual learners, new approaches to teaching and learning, effective support and guidance structures and a curriculum focused more clearly on the learner in all three cycles. Curricular reform will thus be an ongoing process leading to high quality, flexible and more individually tailored education paths.*

# 13 STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING



Aim was to come up with a definition (broad) and a toolkit for practical implementation, while making use of already known research into education

## 14 IN SHORT

- The reliance on active rather than passive learning;
- An emphasis on deep learning and understanding;
- Increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the student;
- An increased sense of autonomy in the learner;

## 14 IN SHORT

- An interdependence between teacher and learner;
- Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship; and
- A reflexive approach to the teaching and learning process on the part of both the teacher and the learner.

# 15 PARAMETERS

- Innovative teaching focused on active learning
- Use of learning outcomes
- System of transfer and accumulation of credits
- Flexible curricula and learning paths
- Student input on curricular design



## 16 STARTING SIMPLE

- Reaching the understanding that learners are different, with their history of learning, knowledge and tradition. That each of them has a different goal in life, each has different strategies for achievement. Each is motivated by different factors. But that they all share the same learning environment, which thus needs to be tailored in as many ways as there are learners.

# 17 Keeping simple

- It is not “one-size-fits-all” solution
- Choice in curricula is not necessarily enough since for making a choice one needs to be able to reflect and analyse
- Environment of learning needs to be enabling – much is spoken about innovation, little about creativity and freedom needed to let it happen

## 18 A WORKABLE DEFINITION

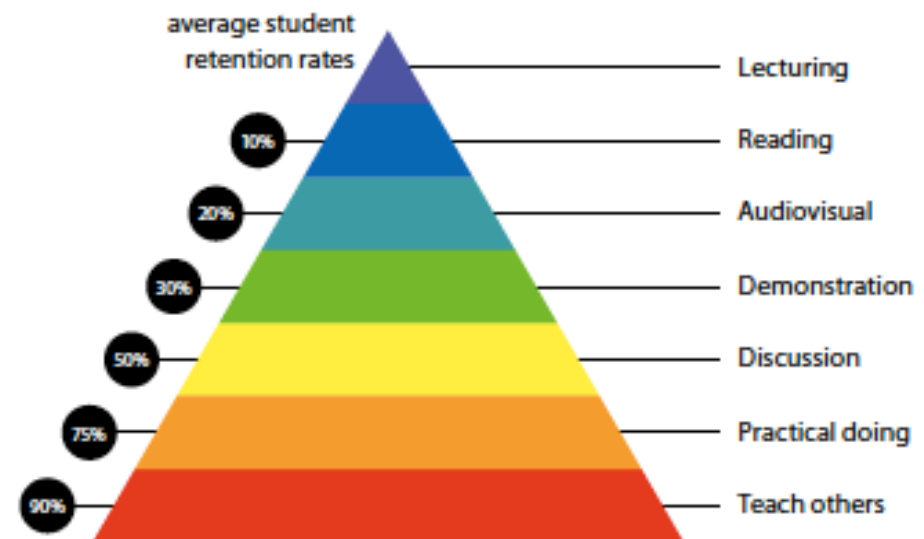
- Student-Centred Learning represents both a mindset and a culture within a given higher education institution and is a learning approach which is broadly related to, and supported by, constructivist theories of learning. It is characterised by innovative methods of teaching which aim to promote learning in communication with teachers and other learners and which take students seriously as active participants in their own learning, fostering transferable skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking and reflective thinking.«

# 19 BRIDGING THE GAP

Student-Centred Learning sees students as an integral part of the academic community, it encourages deeper learning and increase in students' independence and responsibility in learning and gives due consideration to needs of different students

fig. 1 Learning Pyramid

Source: National Training Laboratories, Bethel, Maine



# 20 DRIVERS OF CHANGE

- Personal incentives:  
For teachers, teaching becomes more enjoyable, interactive and rewarding if it is student-centred. For students, learning becomes more interesting if it is interactive;



# 20 DRIVERS OF CHANGE



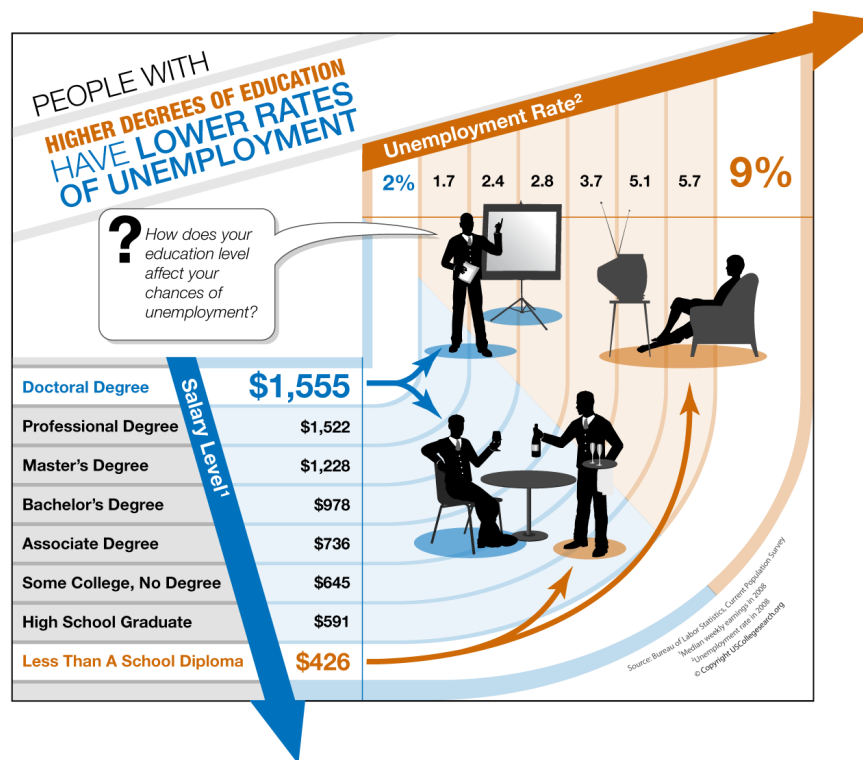
- Educational incentives: Teaching can be more effective if it involves constructive learning. Students will be able to learn better in such an environment, making the time they spend in higher education more meaningful;

# 20 DRIVERS OF CHANGE

- Scholarship incentives:  
Research work can be integrated into teaching, producing a closer connection with the research activities of the teacher. For students, the link with the academic world and opportunities for an academic career will also improve; and



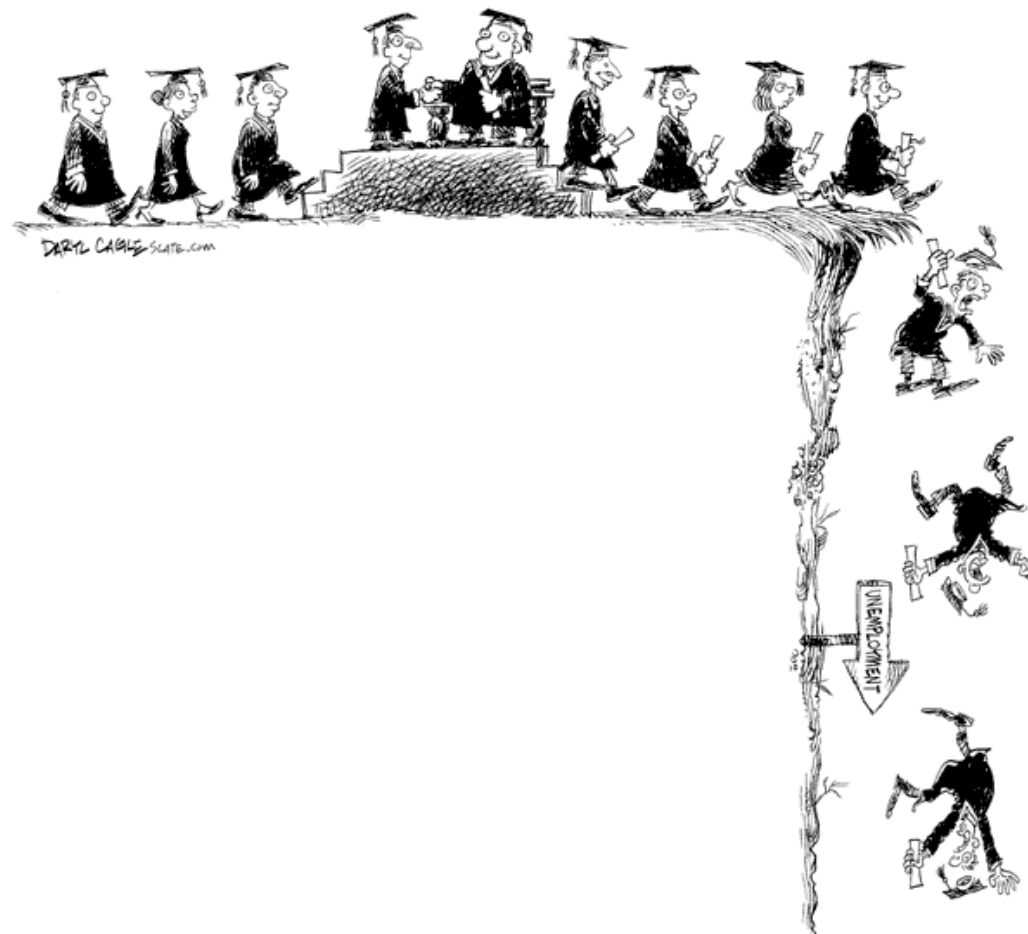
# 20 DRIVERS OF CHANGE



- Economic incentives:  
If academics improve their teaching, it may be possible for them to access higher levels of the career ladder. For students, higher-quality education may give access to higher-level jobs in the labour market



# 21 GENERATION GAP

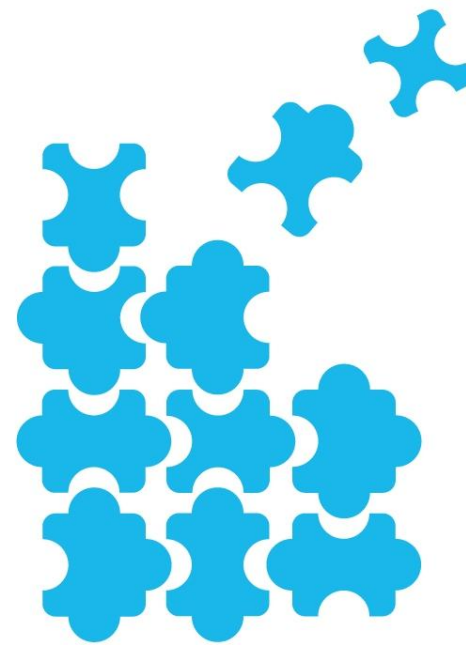


## 22 EMPOWERMENT

- As expectations are growing and becoming divergent in parallel among the student population, it is ever more crucial to reshape the system of learning towards societal goals – something that our grand processes in Europe fail to acknowledge efficiently enough

## 23 MAKING EHEA VISIBLE?

- Learning outcomes and ECTS
- Qualification frameworks
- Recognition of prior learning
- Quality Assurance
- Principles in standards and guidelines (ESG)
- Diploma supplement



**EUROPEAN**  
Higher Education Area

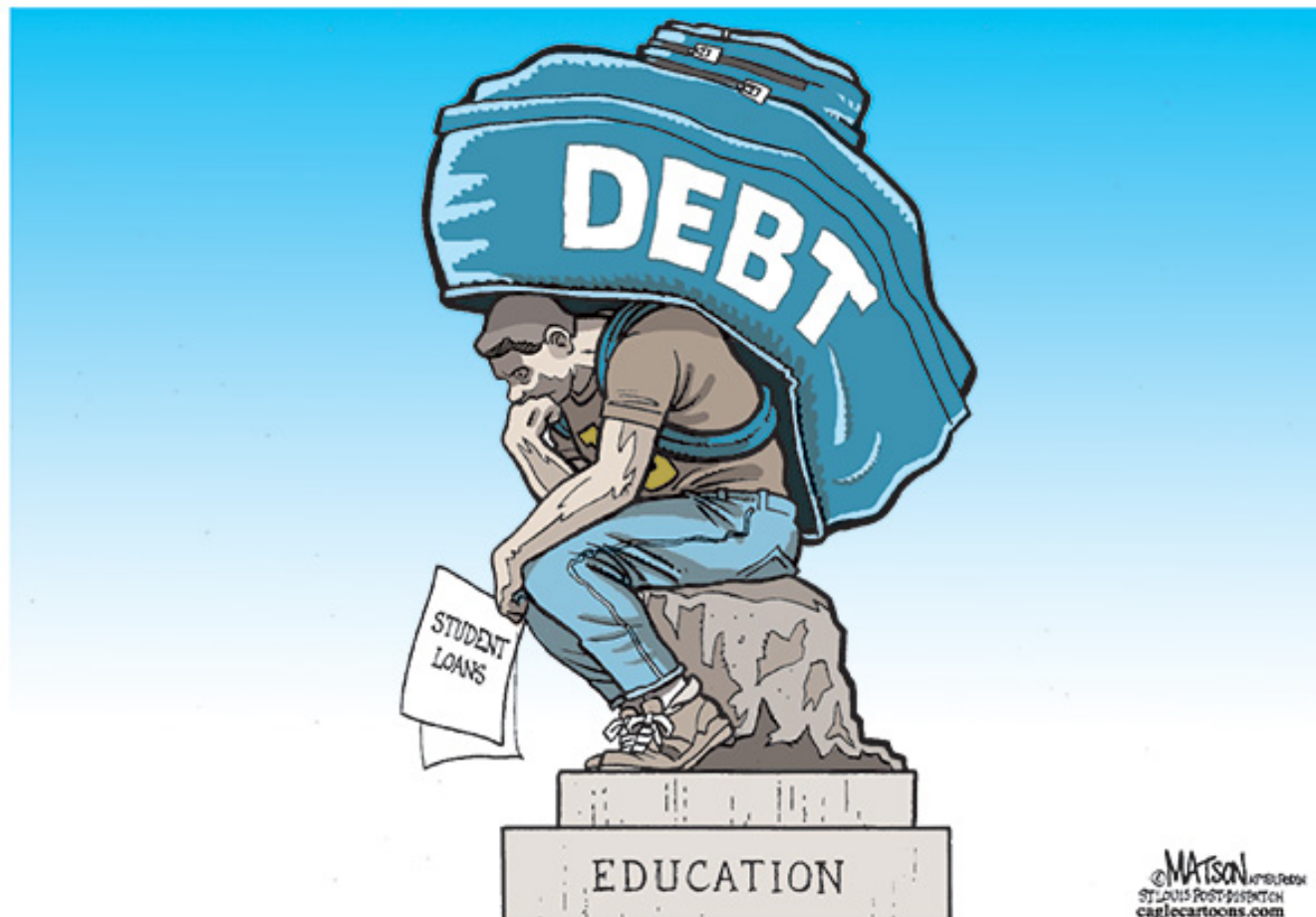
## 24 THREAT

Civil Servant to the Minister:

*"If people don't know what you're doing, they don't know what you're doing wrong."*

From "Yes, Minister!"

# 24 THREAT



## 25 STUDENTS AS CO-CREATORS

Quality assurance has brought us formalised systems of feedback (but no loop?), quality units (but quality culture?) and external agencies, sometimes even an obsession with meeting standards (whose standards?)

## 25 OWNERSHIP OF IDEAS

- Thus perhaps we should not be talking about participation in a process, but taking ownership? Student-Centred process as an (individual) quality enhancement mechanism?

## 26 INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPATION

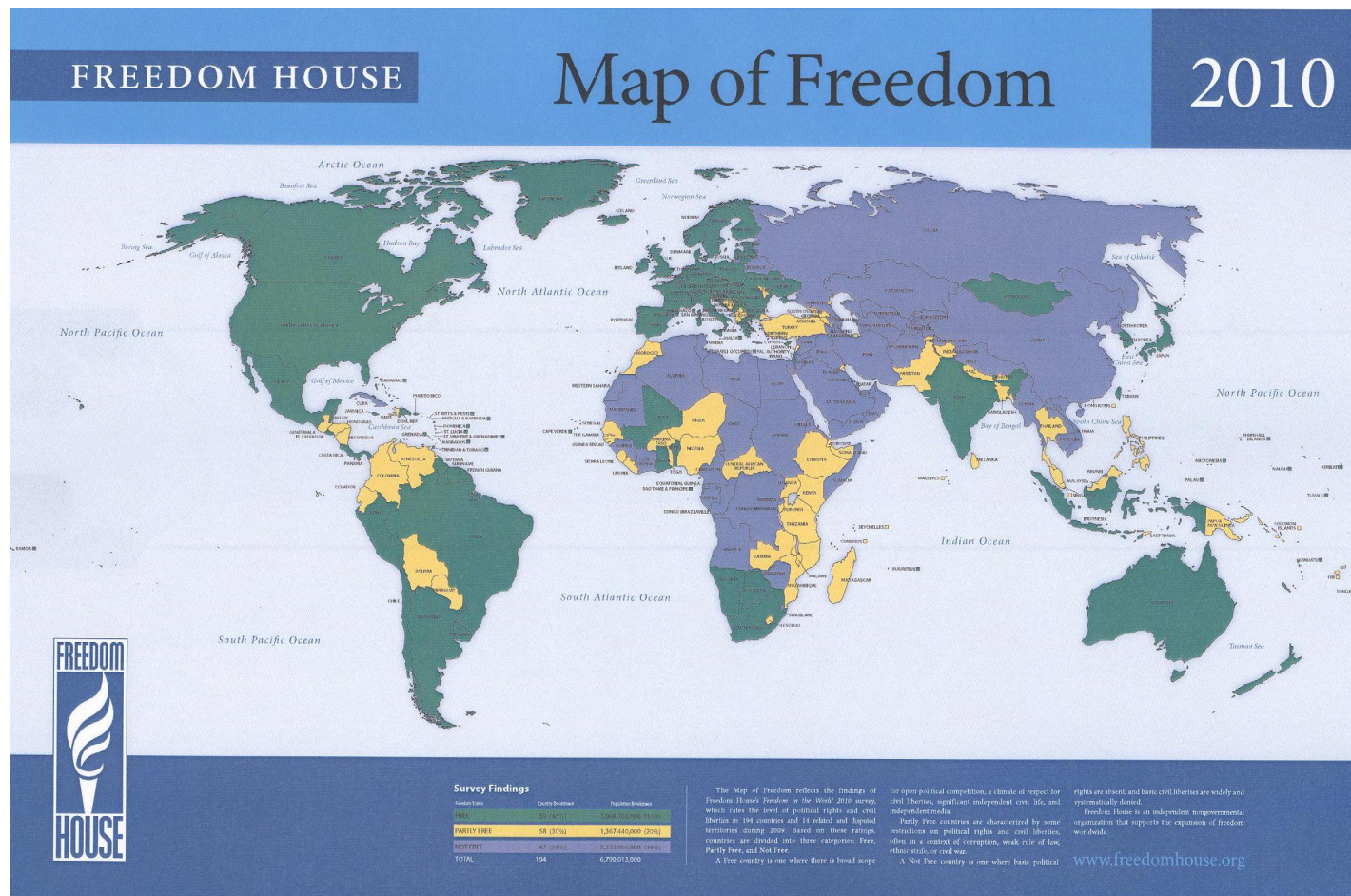
Further, the challenge for quality will not only be in engagement, but serving the citizens(-to-be) also in building up (realistic?) expectations about the learning and teaching



## 27 NUMBERS ARE HERE TO STAY?

- Policy by numbers approach (or policy based evidence) feeds ideas of measurement and benchmarking, promotes simplification through quantifying processes – this is a challenge to overcome as politicians will ask for proof for anything – byproduct of overflow of information

# 28 HOW TO MAINTAIN CULTURE?



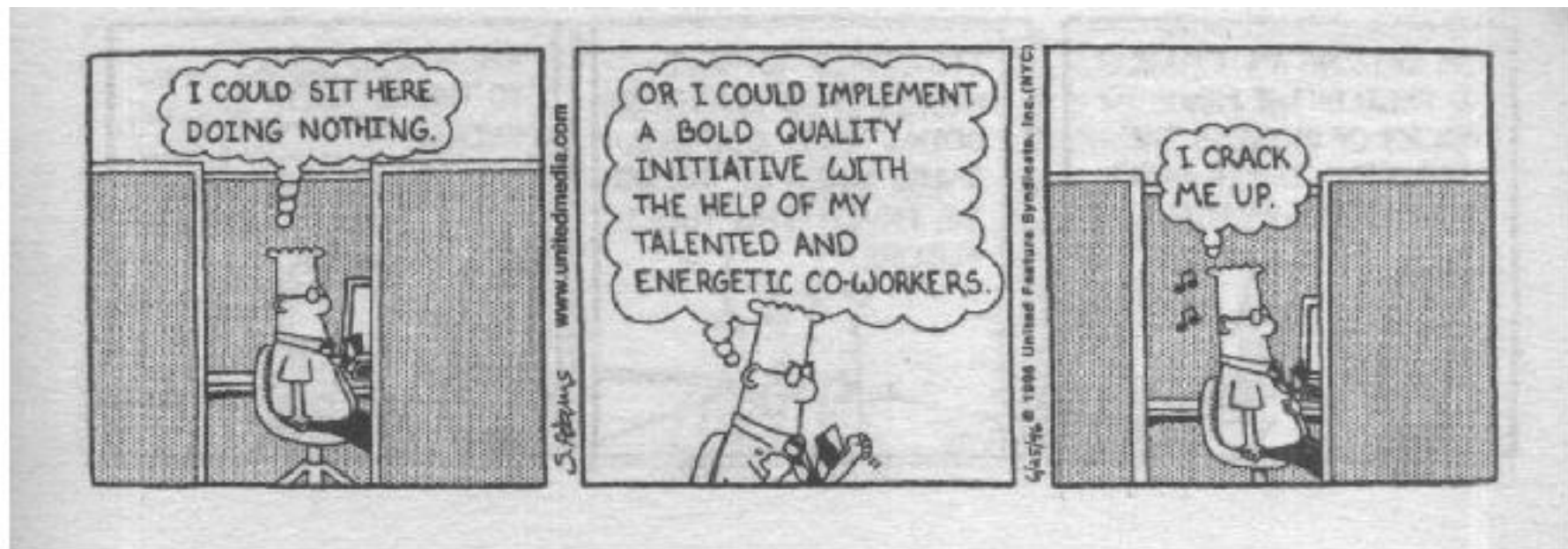
## 29 MISCONCEPTIONS

- Doesn't mean anything in practice **COSTS MORE!** Not appropriate to teach large and diverse student body Undermines the teaching profession **STUDENTS HAVE TO DO MORE** Teachers need to prepare more **IT CAN'T BE SUITED FOR ALL FIELDS** Students will learn little subject-matter **We need new type of teachers to do it** One needs to be tech-savvy

## 30 IN CONCLUSION

- World utterly changed – new information competence
- Empowerment through learning for democracy in formal education
- Each of us has a role to play

# 30 MESSAGE IS HERE



## 30 MESSAGE IS HERE

So let's spread it, discuss,  
develop, but please, let us  
not regurgitate



# Thank you!



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