The Openness of the Academic Staff to New Experiences in the Study Process

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ABSTRACT

The concept of openness is broad, and in this article, the aim is to discover the main conditions that promote teaching staff's openness to new experiences in the study process in this era when traditional educational practices are changing, and digitization processes are prevailing. Recognizing these conditions is essential for universities because the teaching staff is of great importance in how the study processes occur and the feedback link with students. The authors conducted the research as a systematic literature review using qualitative content analysis to interpret the literature and answer the research question, "What conditions promote teaching staff openness to new experiences in the study process?" Based on the application of a literature review and qualitative content analysis, the authors have obtained results that include several conditions with specific frequencies, answering the research question. The main conditions are internationalization, digital competence, and the personality traits of the teaching staff.

Keywords: Higher education, openness, study process, new experiences

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's digital transformation era has spurred changes in the higher education sector. The aim of this article is to discover conditions related to academic staff's openness to new experiences. To ensure the continuity of operations and a high-quality study process, higher education institutions face challenges that break down the usual frameworks of the operation and study process. One of the new challenges is related to the "European Universities" initiative of the European Union to strengthen strategic partnerships across the EU between higher education institutions and to promote the creation of approximately twenty "European Universities" by 2024. They are international university alliances created to become the "universities of the future", promote European values and identity, and improve the quality and competitiveness of European higher education. As a result of transnationalism and the digital transition, the boundaries of the usual concepts are being demolished. By changing the usual concepts and moving closer to the European Union's initiative to strengthen strategic partnerships throughout the European Union between higher education institutions, the impact will be not only on the higher education institutions that will be reformed but also on the national economy, including the development of the national economy, which will be promoted by competitive young specialists - students who will have obtained a degree by combining studies in several countries, thus gaining a richer, international study experience. These changes make us wonder if

we are open to new experiences. This article will explore the teaching staff's openness to new experiences in the higher education study process. The characteristics of the concept of openness and how it can be perceived will be analyzed in Section 2. In Section 4, the authors determine the conditions for teaching staff's openness to new experiences using the method of qualitative content analysis. Frequencies are reviewed. Both numerically, the largest frequencies and individual quantities that do not create frequencies.

2. HOW TO UNDERSTAND ''OPENNESS''?

Openness can be perceived in different ways that involve personal practice, learners' advantages, content, institutions, values, and culture. It is mentioned that open education is useful in improving teaching practice [1].

Open educational resources (OER) are positively related to interdisciplinary cooperation, where university staff can create resources so they can be found, used, shared, and passed on to students [2]. OER is a practice that gives teaching staff the opportunity to make their teaching content more engaging for their students. It also includes an international element. Namely, using OER in communication and cooperation can open up a wider opportunity to share your materials with other universities abroad. It is an opportunity to share materials internationally and create materials for other universities [3]. Open education practices are noticed in higher education institutions working internationally to improve academic staff capacity, including supporting academic strength and realizing the university's role as an organization in today's changing world [4].

Openness as a personal skill is closely related to the characteristics of the teacher`s character. Openness to experience is described as one of the Five Factor Model (FFM) dimensions of personality. Consequently, open-minded individuals are more interested in gaining experience in different fields. Again, open individuals are creative and can adapt, unlike closed individuals, who are more pragmatic and down-to-earth. It has been observed that, in terms of a person's openness and professional behavior, it is a factor that affects professional interests and organization in the university [5].

One of the ways in which higher education institutions can promote and develop openness in their organizations is through the use of a pedagogical strategy. As a result, the availability of information for students has increased, and the quality of courses has also improved. The pedagogical strategy includes several sections, such as methodology, course content and teaching materials, technologies, research, and cooperation. Successfully developing the pedagogical approach benefits all parties involved, both the teaching staff of higher education institutions and students. Students get higher-quality learning content, while at the organizational level of the institution, it is a way to promote

modernization, which includes international cooperation, knowledge creation, and exchange. In this way, the materials, practices, and knowledge created by the higher education institution reach a wider audience [6].

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The scientific aim is to analyze the teaching staff's openness to new experiences focusing on the study process and to determine frequency conditions with qualitative content analysis. According to methodology and scoping [7], the authors first reviewed the literature related to the concept of openness in the context of higher education in order to propose a research subject and a research question. After reviewing several literature reviews, the authors concluded that openness is not unambiguous. It can be understood and viewed in different ways. The authors decided it was necessary to specify openness, but the question arises – to what? So it would be the openness to new experiences, specifically in the study process. New experiences - new teaching methods or models that could convey current and modern information to students. A new experience as a counterpoint to historical and classical stigmas, yet approached with respect. The academic staff ability to adapt innovative practices in their study process for students in order to create a systematic literature review that would be correct and thorough, the authors have chosen Booth, Papaioannou, and Sutton guidelines as a framework for this review [8]. The literature sources used were subsequently used to create qualitative content analysis. It is worth noting that the PICOC model was used to formulate the research question in order to avoid its shortcomings and be accurate and correct. This model divides the research question into three components: who?, what?, and how?, thus delving into each component [8]. These components are shown in Table 1, explaining each component.

Table 1. PICOC model [8]

Population	The problem or situation we are dealing with
Intervention OR Exposure	The ways we are intervening in the situation
Comparison	What could be the alternative?
Outcome(s)	What do we want to achieve?
Context	What is the context of the question? Is it something specific?

After adopting the PICOC model to the specific article, it was possible to precisely formulate the question: What conditions promote teaching staff openness to new experiences in the study process?'' The authors have managed to successfully formulate the research object and research subject. The objects of this literature review were European universities, but the subject of

the study was the promotion of openness to new experiences. Regarding the planning phase, the openness of universities was chosen as the search term. Initially, attempts showed that many published sources with the selected keywords do not answer the research question raised by the authors: what conditions promote teaching staff's openness to new experiences in the study process? The search was conducted in the Scopus database on March 2023. While conducting a literature review, the authors identified books related to the research question. Excerpts from books are publicly available on the Internet. The methodology is based on comparing and analyzing the opinions of the authors of various published scientific articles related to openness in higher education. Methods such as literature reviews, qualitative content analysis, and logical analysis are applied. The literature review allows for identifying the opinions of different authors, drawing out the common and different nuances, thus creating common denominators.

4. CONDITIONS PROMOTING THE OPENNESS OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF TO NEW EXPERIENCES

The authors created a literature review based on scientific articles published in the electronic database Scopus. To perform a qualitative content analysis of the research question "What conditions influence teaching staff's openness to new experiences in the study process?"

Using the keywords "openness of universities", the authors obtained 3107 papers in the database. To limit the scope of these results, the authors inserted other keywords like "university", "education", "openness", "universities", "higher education," and "university student" because the object of this literature review was European universities, but the subject of the study was the promotion of openness to new experiences. After this step, the authors obtained 633 results, which is still a large number. The authors then restricted the document type to 'article' and chose to search only those articles that have reached the final stage, that is, articles that have been published. The total number of results decreased to 511. In order to obtain a more accurate result, the authors limited the research areas by excluding those related to specific industries (for example, medicine, biology, etc.) and obtained 164 results. Also, the authors restricted keywords related to specific industries, such as medicine, resulting in 139 articles. To obtain more up-to-date information, the authors limited the period in which the article has been published, namely the last ten years, obtaining 111 articles. Only those published in English were selected from these articles, resulting in 92 articles. Next, the authors reduced the volume of existing articles to the volume that most accurately corresponded to the stated research question. At the end of the literature review, 30 articles were obtained to determine what conditions affect the teaching staff's openness to new experiences in the study process. As a result of the qualitative content analysis, 11 categories were identified. Descriptions were created through qualitative content analysis and described (Table 2)

Table 2. Category descriptions [created by authors]

Categories	Descriptions	Source
Internationalization	Internationalization in higher education can be defined as the **integration of the international, intercultural, or global dimension** in the teaching and scientific research processes of universities	[9]; [10]
Digital competence	Ability to use technology to acquire, store, create, evaluate, and exchange information **to communicate and participate securely in collaborative or social network**s using the Internet and technology; ability to use information technology confidently and critically in studies, work, and free time	[11]; [12]; [13]
Personality traits of the teaching staff	Character is the sum of a person's qualities and habits that manifest in his actions. Character determines a **person's actions, behavior, and demeanor**	[14]; [15]; [16]; [17]; [18]
Increasing pedagogical competences	Teaching methodical and informational competence (pedagogical education), **knowledge and preparation for teaching and upbringing work**, as well as the ability acquired in the educational process and based on knowledge, experience, values, and attitudes, which manifests itself in skills and readiness for pedagogical activity	[3]; [19]; [20]
Improvement of organizational culture	Organizational culture is a component of **functional decision-making in universities**. Its improvement determines the activities performed by the organization, including the ways to achieve goals, and affects employees' sense of self, cognitive, and operational processes.	[13]; [21]; [22]
Innovations in educational management	A set of activities for the improvement of the quality of education, which includes **efforts to make sustainable improvements to the university**, can be done if there is a readiness for change because of the innovation itself	[23]; [24]; [25]; [26]
Strategic communication	Strategic communication is the strategic, planned, targeted, and coordinated application of **communication tools to achieve organizational goals**	[27]; [28]; [29]
Open education	Open education is an educational movement that is linked to other educational movements such as critical pedagogy and to an educational stance that promotes **greater participation and inclusion in society**.	[30]
Interdisciplinary cooperation	The teamwork that occurs when **colleagues from different disciplines work together** to learn about each other's areas of expertise as a result of interdisciplinary collaboration, opportunities are created that might not have been discovered had the collaboration not taken place	[31]; [32]
Capacity building of academic staff	A set of activities that includes **internships in companies and providing training in areas that require additional competences**, supplementing the academic family of the university by attracting foreign academic staff and doctoral students	[4]
Co-creation of teachers and students	A process in which **students collaborate with teaching staff** to create a study experience	[33]

Understanding categories is a very important step. The authors developed the descriptions based on content analysis and their understanding of the specific category, which is based on scientific articles, books, and professional experience. Also, creating category descriptions helped the authors conduct a successful qualitative content analysis (Table 3).

Table 3. Results of qualitative content analysis [created by authors]

Categories	Frequency	Frequency %
Internationalization	18	18.6
Digital competence	14	14.4
Personality traits of the teaching staff	12	12.4
Increasing pedagogical competences	10	10.3
Improvement of organizational culture	9	9.3
Innovations in educational management	8	8.2
Strategic communication	7	7.2
Open education	7	7.2
Interdisciplinary cooperation	5	5.2
Capacity building of academic staff	4	4.1
Co-creation of teachers and students	3	3.1
Total	**97**	**100.0**

Summarizing the results, it can be observed that the three dominant frequencies are very close to each other: internationalization (18.6%), digital competence (14.4%), and personality traits of the teaching staff (12.4%), which are mentioned in the selected research articles. These frequencies are followed by increasing pedagogical competencies (10.3%), improvement of organizational culture (9.3%), innovations in educational management (8.2%), strategic communication (7.2%), and open education (7.2%), as summarized (Figure 1).
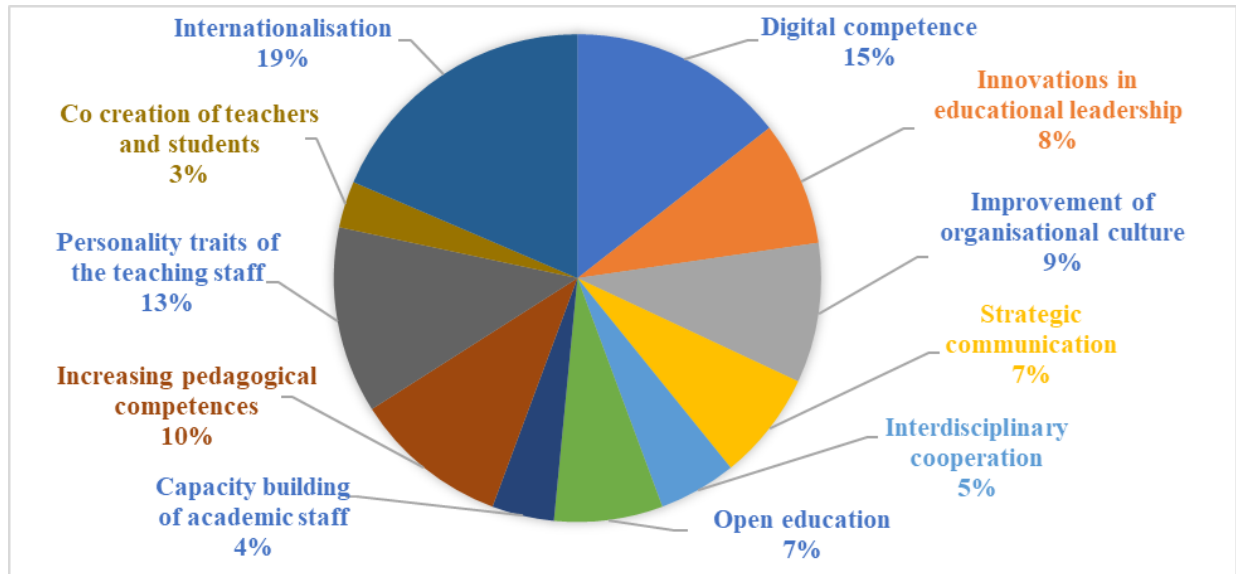

Figure 1. Results of qualitative content analysis [created by authors]

The relatively lowest frequencies are interdisciplinary cooperation (5.2%), capacity building of academic staff (4.1%), and co-creation of teaching staff and students (3.1%). Other conditions mentioned in the research articles did not even form categories because they were low competitiveness (n = 1), transformational leadership (n = 1), and language skills (n = 1). The authors conclude that it has been possible to answer the research question, but the answer is that it is a set of several conditions that form the answer and that influence the academic staff openness in the study process. The highest frequency of internationalization – by which we mean international, intercultural, or global dimension integration – is in the university. In order to make internationalization one of the university's priorities, one way would be to integrate it into its strategy. On the other hand, improving organizational culture, which includes functional decision-making and ways of achieving university goals, was not among the dominant frequencies.
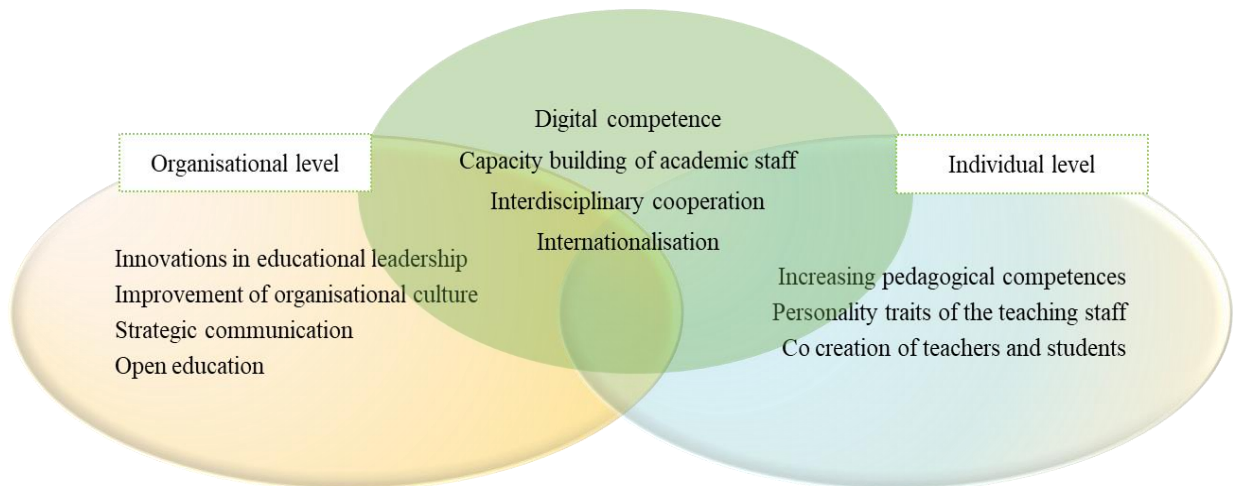

Figure 2. Interrelationship of organizational and individual levels [created by authors]

The authors believe that after identifying the conditions that influence the openness of teaching staff in the study process, it is necessary to study the formation and improvement of the organizational culture in depth. The authors believe that

integrating these conditions into the university's strategy and organizational culture could increase the openness of the teaching staff to the study process. Several conclusions can be drawn when determining category frequencies in qualitative content analysis. The organizational and individual levels can be distinguished, as observed (Figure 2).

The organizational level includes innovations in educational leadership, organizational culture improvement, strategic communication, and open education. An individual level includes increasing pedagogical competencies, personality traits of the teaching staff, and the co-creation of teachers and students. Such frequencies that apply to both levels are digital competence, capacity building of academic staff, interdisciplinary cooperation, and internationalization. It can be observed that two frequencies out of four, which can be attributed to both the personal and organizational levels, are also the two highest frequencies obtained as a result of the qualitative content analysis. This indicates that the academic staff's openness to new experiences can be promoted at both levels, and it is equally important to involve both the staff and the university as an organization.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Openness concept encourages higher education institutions to promote international cooperation and share their knowledge, practices, and materials. Open teaching staff could improve their academic capacity, gain experience, and gain international recognition by sharing their experience and knowledge, while students could learn more modern academic content and co-create knowledge with teaching staff. As a result of qualitative content analysis, eleven categories were identified. The frequency analysis of the categories shows that the conditions that most promote teaching staff's openness to new experiences are internationalization (18.6%), digital competence (14.4%), and teacher character traits (12.4%). The authors believe that after determining the conditions that promote the openness of teaching staff in the study process, the formation and improvement of organizational culture should be studied in depth. The authors believe that integrating these conditions into the university's strategy and organizational culture could increase the openness of the teaching staff to the study process. In order to make internationalization one of the university's priorities, one way would be to integrate it into its strategy. On the other hand, improving organizational culture, which includes functional decision-making and ways of achieving university goals, was not among the dominant frequencies.

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