EVALUATING UNIVERSITY PEDAGOGY: TEACHER AND STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract:

The purpose of the paper is to investigate the field of University Pedagogy and specifically the teaching characteristics and practices adopted in the postgraduate programs of the Alexander Technological Educational Institution (TEI) of Thessaloniki (now International Hellenic University). To this end, we conducted a mixed methodology research (triangulation) by implicating both the students and the teachers of the institution. The data collection methods were: 7 semi-structured interviews with the teaching staff and student questionnaires (n=98). Results show that a lot of the features of teaching are in line with the principles of student-centered and adult learning. Students appear to be satisfied with the teaching and the overall learning experience. They state that the climate is positive, the teachers friendly and accessible. However, despite the use of many teaching techniques (discussion, brainstorming, working in groups), the results show that enriched presentation remains the technique most frequently used. Finally, a significant correlation was found between students' academic background (major) and the way they perceive teaching (teacher-centered or student-centered).

Keywords: university pedagogy, adult education, student-centered teaching, pedagogical methodology

1. Introduction

In recent years, the field of University Pedagogy has attracted international and European research interest. Specifically, the issue of the transition from traditional teacher-centered university teaching to a student-centered teaching-learning approach has recently been

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debated, with emphasis on the adoption of pedagogical principles, methods, and practices that promote learner engagement, reflection, learner autonomy, critical learning and responsibility (Kedraka & Rotidi, 2017; EHEA Yerevan, 2015; ECTS User's Guide 2015; EHEA Bucharest, 2012; The Bologna Declaration, 1999). Higher Education Institutions aim to provide quality teaching and education, to cultivate a love for learning, to create integrated personalities capable of critical thinking within not only the educational institution but the society as well (Asonitou, 2016; Fragoulis & Valkanos, 2016; Gougoulakis & Oikonomou, 2014; European Commission, 2011). Ultimately, higher education promotes the ideals, goals, and methods of adult education (active learning, critical analysis, control, autonomy, skills development, differentiated teaching, students' experiences, student-teacher collaboration).

In Greece, research on the above topic has emerged for almost a decade now and focuses either on students' perceptions of teaching methods, approaches and roles derived from the theoretical tradition of adult education (Nitsiou, 2018; Pavlakis, Talias & Zannetos, 2016; Tzotzou & Bigilaki, 2013; Pappa & Thanopoulos, 2006) or on the teaching perspectives and learning practices of teachers in higher education (Frementiti, 2018; Rotidi, 2015; Ioakeimidou, Papadimitriou & Lionarakis, 2015; Rotidi and Karalis, 2014).

A universal paradox was - and for some countries still is - that academics lacked pedagogical training. Things seem to be changing in some countries (Sweden, England, Cyprus, Norway, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Poland, Switzerland, Ukraine) which, following EU directives, offer pedagogical training to their teaching staff (Kedraka & Dimassi, 2015; HQA, 2015; Kaltsidis, Orfanidou, Kedraka, Karalis, 2021). In Greece, the necessity of pedagogical training has not been clearly and explicitly defined as a prerequisite for teaching in a higher education institution (Kedraka, 2016). It is mentioned in Greek laws, but the context remains unclear and ultimately the responsibility for determining the criteria that must be met lies with the educational institution itself. So, in practice, theoretical training and a master's or a doctoral degree are equal to teaching/instructional competence.

The two basic constituents of higher education are research and teaching. However, the former is carried out at the expense of the latter (Kedraka & Rotidi, 2017; Kedraka, 2016; Minter, 2011) and it is the quantity of research and not the quality of teaching that determines and frames quality assessment in higher education (Gougoulakis, Kedraka, Oikonomou, & Anastasiades, 2020). Teachers are very active in publications, focus more on and derive greater pleasure from their research (Cretchley, Edwards, O'Shea, Sheard, Hurst, Brookes, 2013) but neglect to improve their teaching skills. As a result, teaching ends up being an unfortunate necessity.

The conditions cited (shift towards student-centered learning, lack of pedagogical training, research against teaching) in combination with others not addressed in the present paper (institutional constraints, workload, multiple classes, teacher/student ratio) create a reality in which the learning process takes place. This reality is explored here, by focusing on the teaching staff practices, methods, techniques, and instruction characteristics, on the basis of a broad categorization of teaching as teacher-centered or

student-centered (Gioti, 2019; 2010). This dipole emerges in the relevant studies presented and guides our discussion of the findings of the present research.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 University Pedagogy and Adult Education

University Pedagogy is a relatively new field, especially in Greece. According to Karalis (2020) several scientific fields and areas have influenced and contributed to the field of University Pedagogy, from the field of Medical Education or Engineering Education (development of theory and tools) to new technologies, digital learning, and theoretical approaches from the field of Psychology and Learning Theories.

However, the field that most consistently permeates University Pedagogy is the field of Adult Education. The contribution of Adult Education theorists in the field of University Pedagogy is constant and focuses on the students' needs and on methods and techniques that promote critical reflection (id.).

So, where do the two fields converge? Practices of non-formal education (hence of Adult Education too) are constantly and increasingly trying to transfer to formal education, mainly Tertiary education (Karalis & Raikou, 2016; Raikou & Karalis, 2016). These practices include participatory teaching techniques, flexible ways of syllabus and curriculum construction, adoption of principles and methods of Adult Education (debate, brainstorming, case study, role-playing), and an intensive effort to foster the development of critical reflection (Karalis & Raikou, 2016; Raikou & Karalis, 2016; Valkanos et al., 2019). Other points of convergence are the learning environment (fruitful, cooperative, inclusive), the central role of the learner and the use of learners' experiences (Raikou & Karalis, 2016).

2.2 Relevant Studies

Due to the relatively recent emergence of University Pedagogy, research studies on university teaching and its techniques and methods are limited. Some of them - international and national - are mentioned below.

The research of Onwuegbuzie et al. (2007) with a sample of 912 US public university students showed that students believe that teaching should be focused on the students and their needs and that appropriate teaching methods should be adopted. Sander, Stevenson, King and Coates (2000) in their survey of 395 freshman students in the UK's School of Medicine, Business and Psychology found that students entered the university with low expectations about the teaching methods. Their expectations are verified as the dominant method of teaching is the typical lecture which is inconsistent with the principles of adult learning and the need for active participation and is thus judged as ineffective (Husbands, 1996; Butler, 1992).

Ballantyne, Bain and Packer (1999) collected data from 708 teachers and conducted 44 teacher interviews at 40 Australian Universities. They concluded that lecture is the most common teaching practice in all disciplines. The same conclusions were reached by Mulryan-Kyne (2010) and Lammers and Murphy (2002) after observing teaching in 58

university classrooms. Gow, Kember and Sivan (1992) with a sample of 39 lecturers of Hong Kong University of Technology, Gow and Kember (1993) with a sample of 170 lecturers from 16 departments of two Hong Kong universities and Murray and McDonald (1997) with a sample of 39 students from the Faculty of Business Administration found that while the objectives of teachers are student-centered, professional preparation and methods such as lectures and seminars aimed at knowledge transfer dominate in practice. Rotidi et al. (2020) exploring 58 Greek teachers' views from the Ionian University about their potential need for pedagogical training found that the majority supports that such a need indeed exists.

Similarly, Nitsiou (2018), in her research on the views of Aristotle University postgraduate students regarding the role of teachers as adult educators, concluded that there is a lack of student-centered approach to teaching and learning and that the goal of teaching is the transmission of knowledge. Some teachers use techniques such as working in groups, or presentations enriched with discussion and questions- answers. However, the majority of students argue that the dominant teaching technique is traditional lecture, and that teacher training is necessary. Also, they argue that it is necessary to adopt the principles and practices of Adult Education and the use of participatory techniques in teaching (postgraduate) students, a claim that is also made by Pavlakis, Talias and Zannetos (2016) in their research with a sample of students of the Open University of Cyprus.

Tzotzou and Bigilakis (2013) in their research on the views of postgraduate students of the Hellenic Open University (HOU) regarding personalized learning concluded that students believe that teachers do not have the necessary expertise and training in the subject. Moreover, they consider that there is no familiarity with adult-appropriate teaching techniques. Toka and Gioti (2021) found that the use of the most active teaching techniques is limited in the postgraduate programs of the former Alexander Technological Educational Institution of Thessaloniki even though teachers' views about learning and teaching are in line with person-centered humanistic learning theories and cognitive constructivism. They also claim that there are other factors outside of the teachers' attitudes and practices (infrastructure problems, high student-teacher ratio, centralized educational system, lack of pedagogic training) that hinder their efforts. This finding is present in other studies concerning the training of teachers at all levels of Greek education, revealing an endogenous characteristic of the specific education system (Gioti, 2010).

Pappa and Thanopoulos (2006) in their research on undergraduate and postgraduate students' perceptions of the criteria that make a university lecturer effective found that postgraduates more than undergraduates consider the following important: the connection between old and new knowledge, application of various educational techniques to promote interaction, encouragement, and self-development. The latter characteristics were considered more important for female postgraduate students.

The findings of the surveys are fully in line with the 2010-2011 annual report of the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQA), which states that

traditional teaching methods are adopted during teaching (Kedraka, 2016˙ Kokkos, 2016˙ Chatzifotiou & Tsiantos, 2016).

However, Ioakeimidou, Papadimitriou and Lionarakis's (2015) research regarding the teaching experience of the HOU tutors argued that teachers often use instructional techniques aimed at collaborative, experiential and active learning.

The general conclusions of the studies presented show that the teaching practices and techniques adopted by the University's teaching staff are teacher-centered. The dominant teaching technique is typical lecture while students want student-centered teaching methods and techniques that serve their needs and promote active participation, autonomy, and critical thinking. Finally, all parties involved in the learning process (students and teaching staff) consider pedagogical training and support with programs and training seminars necessary for the teaching staff.

2.2 Research Objective and Questions

The importance of student-centered learning and the application of the principles governing it when teaching in higher education has been emphasized at the international and European level. However, there are insufficient references to the practices and characteristics of teaching as well as the evaluation of the educational programs offered by institutions. The Alexander Technological Educational Institution (TEI) of Thessaloniki is a large educational institution in the country and offers a variety of postgraduate programs for adults aged 25-55 +.

The purpose of the research is to explore/investigate university teaching and the teaching practices of the postgraduate programs of the Alexander TEI of Thessaloniki in connection with the principles of adult and student-centered learning.

The research questions are as follows:
1) What are the characteristics of university staff's teaching/instruction?
2) What teaching techniques does the university's teaching staff use? Do they comply with the principles of adult and student-centered learning?

3. Methodology and Sample

Our paper presents part of the data of research that was conducted using a mixed methodology (qualitative and quantitative) in the context of a Master's Thesis at the Hellenic Open University that was completed in 2019.

The population of our quantitative research was the students (380 subjects) of three postgraduate programs of the Alexander TEI of Thessaloniki. The sample was chosen with convenience, non-probability sampling (Bryman, 2016). The data compilation was done using a Questionnaire as a survey instrument. Both the Questionnaire and the interview questions were constructed based on various sources namely: The Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI) of Pratt and Collins (2000), Collins & Pratt (2011) and Pratt, Collins & Selinger (2001), the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) (Stergiou & Airey, 2012) and other questionnaires from Greek researchers dealing with similar issues (Nitsiou, 2018˙ Nikolakoudis, 2016˙ Rotidi, 2015˙ Bantiou, 2014). Both

research tools were administered via email. The response rate to the questionnaire was 25,8% (n=98). The statistical processing of data was performed with the SPSS 17, making use of descriptive techniques, and deductive statistics.

The reliability of the survey was tested with a coefficient of internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha. Three composite variables were created, each from a set of questions/elements that measure different aspects of teaching. The first variable named "Teaching Characteristics" was created by merging the questions regarding the instruction/teaching. The level of reliability of the variable is 0,888 which is acceptable. The second variable "Actions and attitudes of teaching personnel" was created by merging the questions regarding the teaching personnel. The level of reliability of the variable is 0.924, so, the internal consistency was considered very satisfactory.

The third variable named "Frequency of teaching techniques" was created by merging the questions about the frequency of use of each technique and its level of reliability is 0.838, which is satisfactory. A PCA and Varimax rotation analysis of the third variable showed that the 9 components scale includes two components with an eigenvalue >1, so it is understood that the concept measured by the variable includes two dimensions. The first dimension which we will call "active and student-student interaction techniques" includes the following components/techniques: role playing, working in groups, simulation, practice, questions-answers. The Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.824. The second dimension named "traditional and teacher-student interaction techniques" includes the following components/techniques: lecture, enriched presentation, brainstorming, and conversation. The Cronbach's Alpha value is 0,779.

The qualitative research was carried out on a homogeneous purposive sampling. We conducted seven (7) semi-structured interviews with teachers of three postgraduate programs of the Alexander TEI. The sample was purposeful, and its selection met the following criteria:

- all participants are permanent members of the teaching staff;
- they all teach in one or more postgraduate programs that satisfy the conditions of adult education programs;
- they teach in soft disciplines, so it is more possible (according to the bibliography) to adopt a student-centered approach to teaching.

We sent the interview to a total of 16 teachers of whom 7 responded. During the interviews, teachers were asked questions equivalent to the questionnaire's issues. Specifically, they were asked to describe the practices and techniques they adopt during teaching, the relationship with their students, the conditions that hinder their work, the obstacles, and problems their students face and the way they address them. Content analysis was used to study and examine the collected data. The interviews' output led to the emergence of certain thematic categories which were equivalent to the research questions and the interview's main topics. The theme was the unit of analysis following the basic principles of the default research framework theory and specifically, the part of the discourse (sentence, paragraph) in which the theme was identified (Kyriazi, 2011).

3.1 Sample

a. Interviews

The answers to the interviews came exclusively from male teachers aged 40 to 64 years. Six out of seven hold doctorate degrees. They have been working at the Alexander TEI of Thessaloniki for 10 to 31 years and 4 of them have taught and/or continue to teach at other educational institutions such as the Cyprus University of Technology, Hellenic Open University, University of Thessaly, TEI of Western Macedonia, University of Macedonia, TEI of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. Four of the seven teachers have attended training programs in either pedagogical methodology or adult education. Two have attended adult education programs with one of them being a certified adult educator and two have attended pedagogical programs (Table 1).

Table 1: The profile of the teachers-participants

Interview Subject	Age	Teaching experience at TEI (in years)	Postgraduate Program (M.Sc.)**	Expertise/ Training
S1	46	10	H.C.U.M., MBA	
S2	40	18	M.O.E.U., MBA	Adult Education
S3	62	11	M.O.E.U.	Adult Education
S4	55	17	T.M.B.A.	Teaching for Special Purposes
S5	40	12	H.C.U.M., M.O.E.U., M.B.A.	
S6	44	10	M.O.E.U.	Adult Education
S7	64	31	T.M.B.A., M.M.L.I.S.	Educational Methodology

Note: H.C.U.M.: Health Care Units Management; M.O.E.U.: Management and Organization of Educational Units; T.M.B.A.: Tourism Management and Business Administration; M.B.A.: M.Sc. In Business Administration; M.M.L.I.S.: Money Management, Logistics and Informational Systems

b. Questionnaires

The sample of the research consisted of students (n = 98) from three postgraduate programs of the TEI of Thessaloniki. 70.4% (n = 69) of the respondents were women and 29.6% men (n = 29). 28.6% of the respondents belong to the age group of 25-34, 37.8% to 35-44, 27.6% to 45-54 and 6.1% to 55+ (Table 2). Half of them attend the postgraduate program "Management and Organization of Educational Units", 37.8% attend "Management of Health and Welfare Units" and 12.2% attend "Management of Tourism Enterprises and Organizations". The majority of participants (n = 96) work.

Table 2: The profile of the postgraduate students-participants

Sex	Men	Women		
	29 (29,6%)	69 (70,4%)		
Age	25-34y	35-44y	45-54y	55+y
	28 (28,6%)	37 (37,8%)	27 (27,5%)	6 (6,1%)
M.Sc.	Management & Organization of Educational Units	Health Care Units Management	Tourism Management and Business Administration	
	49 (50%)	37 (37,8%)	12 (12,2%)	

4. Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the characteristics of university staff's teaching/instruction?

The responses of the teaching staff show that teaching takes place in a very good environment of collaboration and communication through an interactive exchange of personal experiences that are not always directly related to the education process. Students agree and state that they were able to express their views freely (69,4%) and that the teaching staff was friendly, communicative, and willing to respond to their needs (69.4%).

When asked if and how they promote the cooperation and involvement of students in the learning process, teachers state that they do so through a personal acquaintance, dialogue, exchange of experiences and group work. The role of the students is described as "*decisive as the degree of active participation determines the flow of the course*" (S5). Most of the students (65.3%) agree (30.6% strongly agree, 34.7% agree) that they were actively involved in the teaching process and were encouraged to cooperate and communicate with each other by the teaching staff (64,8%).

In addition, teachers, when asked what teaching techniques were used during teaching sessions, reported the use of different techniques such as dialogue, role-playing, working in groups, open-ended questions, exercises, examples, and multimedia evaluation. The lecture was mentioned by almost all respondents. Respectively, 63.3% (18.4% strongly agree, 44.9% agree) of the students stated that they agree with the proposition/sentence that active teaching techniques were used in teaching while 85.7% of them consider the ability of the teaching staff to adopt and use such techniques as very important (39.8% extremely important, 45.9% very important).

When asked whether they use teaching aids, all teaching staff responded positively and reported the use of projector systems, internet, HEAL link, interactive board, projector, chalkboard, and printed material. Most students (72.5%) agree with this statement (27.6% strongly agree, 44.9% agree).

Moving to the barriers and conditions that hinder their educational work, teachers report mainly extrinsic factors that have nothing to do with those directly involved in the learning process (teachers, students). Some of their answers mention poor organization, bureaucracy, overloaded administration work, and lack of infrastructure. Students seem to agree with the above, as some of the changes proposed by them are: better sanitation in the premises and in particular the toilets of the buildings, reduction of consecutive

teaching sessions, common policy on academic issues, more practical implementation, more group work and active teaching techniques, better organization, one stable and not alternating teachers for each course.

Besides the conditions that affect the efforts of teachers, there are also obstacles that students in the programs face. As such, teachers report time constraints, multiple obligations, and roles of students (work, family, personal/financial problems) as well as the physical changes that come with time (weak memory, inability to concentrate, fatigue). Teachers face these obstacles with understanding, and flexibility and by using techniques that actively engage them. Indicatively they say: "*We choose flexible working hours, and we insist on case studies where we justify our work bibliographically*" (S1), "*I do exercises in the classroom to embed new concepts faster*" (S3). Students report that teachers were indeed flexible if circumstances demanded it (69.4%) (15.3% strongly agree, 54.1% agree) However, only half indicated that teaching created conditions that promote student autonomy and control of learning (feature of student-centered learning), a fact which is important as it hinders the creation of a program of study which corresponds to the needs of each student individually.

An encouraging fact is that most teachers state they review and reflect on their teaching practice (after each training session, per year). This revision considers the students' opinion and assessment as *"… each class is different and therefore the adaptation of materials and methods is necessary*" (S1). The purpose of this review is to determine if the right techniques were used, if the objectives were achieved, if there were errors or omissions during teaching. Then the teacher's teaching and actions will be modified if necessary to achieve the desired results. Similarly, when students were asked if teaching promotes critical thinking 61,2% responded positively, with 28,6% remaining neutral and 10,2% disagreeing.

The responses presented so far concerning specific aspects of staff teaching and practices. However, students were also asked for an overall evaluation of teaching and their experience from their participation in the program. In the question of whether they consider the teaching to be student-centered or teacher-centered, 63.3% of the respondents consider it to be student-centered and 36.7% to be teacher-centered. When asked if the postgraduate program met their expectations, 66.7% answered positively (29.6% extremely, 36.7% very much). In the open question of whether they are generally satisfied with the quality of teaching, the majority (77 out of 98 participants appear satisfied, with some praising specific teachers while deeming others as unsuitable to teach in an adult postgraduate program. Of the remaining 21, 14 did not respond to the question, while 7 said they were not satisfied without however making any suggestions for improvement. Finally, regarding the necessity of the training of the teaching staff, 82.6% stated that the teaching staff needs training (40.8% extremely, 25.5% very much and 16.3% moderately).

Research question 2: What teaching techniques does the university's teaching staff use? Do they comply with the principles of adult and student-centered learning?

Methods suitable for teaching in higher education are participatory and heuristic methods (A. Rogers, 1999), focusing both on the group and the individual learner. This is because the techniques of these methods are proactive and therefore promote the involvement of students in the learning process, and involvement that is considered of high importance and in accordance with the principles of student-centered and adult learning. For this reason, it was deemed necessary not simply to address the general question about the use of methods that promote active learning but to investigate the frequency of use of each teaching technique separately. Techniques that most respondents agree to have always been used are those of enriched presentation (36.7%), discussion (23.5%) and lecture (21.4%), followed by the question-and-answer technique (12.2%), workings in groups (8.2%), brainstorming and simulation (7.1% both), role play (6.1%) and practice (5.1%). Techniques that most respondents state that are frequently used, are discussion (52%), lecture and brainstorming (51%), question-and-answer (50%). Following is the technique of working in groups (46.9%), enriched presentation (39.8%), simulation and role-playing (30.6%) and hands-on training (28.6%). The responses show that the techniques that tend to be used the most are enriched presentation (76.5%), discussion (75.5%) and lecture (72.4%), followed by questions (62.2%), brainstorming (58.1%) and working in groups (55%).

Moving on to the less popular techniques we find that the technique most respondents agree that is never used is the workshop technique (16.3%). Following is the technique of simulation (10.2%), role-playing (9.2%) and question-and-answer technique (6.1%). The remaining techniques range from 3-1%. The simulation technique according to 22.4% is rarely used. Following is the role-playing technique (18.4%), workshop with 15.3% and the rest with a percentage from 9.2% to 1%. From the answers, we conclude that the techniques that tend to be used less are simulation (32.6%), workshops (31.6%) and role-playing (27.5%).

The results above reveal a contradiction. When students were given the general statement: "Teachers use teaching techniques that promote active learning", 63,3% agreed with it, only 5,1% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed. Only when they were asked about each technique separately, was it revealed that the dominant technique used is that of enriched presentation.

4.1 Inferential Statistics

Correlation tests were conducted. The researchers wanted to find out whether variables such as gender, age, and students' academic background (major) influence their satisfaction or the way they perceive teaching. For this purpose, a Pearson x2 test was performed. The x2 test revealed a statistically significant relationship between the variables of gender and student expectations (p = 0.009). Men tend to state that the program met their expectations very much while women moderately. Moreover, students' academic background (major) was found to influence the way they perceive teaching. The test resulted in a p-value of <0.001 which indicates that students who are

teachers (undergraduate studies in education) and thus pedagogically trained, tend to perceive it as teacher-centered while the rest (students from tourism and health undergraduate programs) as student-centered. This finding needs to be examined more closely as it is important to understand the reasons why the students' academic background (major) affects the way teaching is perceived.

4.2 Discussion

From the processing of the participants' answers, it is concluded that the students attending the postgraduate programs of the Alexander TEI of Thessaloniki are generally satisfied with their participation in them. Regarding the first research question (teaching practices and characteristics), most participants believe that teaching is student-centered, and promotes active participation and free expression. The majority of students expressed the view that teachers adopted practices and behaviors that are consistent with the principles of adult learning. Specifically, they argued that the teaching staff was friendly and communicative, encouraged collaboration among students, promoted critical thinking, remained flexible and open toward different needs and used techniques that promote active learning. The above contradicts the findings of other studies (Nitsiou, 2018; Tzotzou & Bigilakis, 2013; Sander, Stevenson, King & Coates, 2000) where students claim that adult appropriate teaching techniques are absent in their classrooms. On the other hand, in our research only half of the students stated that teaching promoted student autonomy and control of the learning process by themselves.

The second research question concerns the methods and techniques used by teachers. According to teachers' answers, we see that they adopt methods and techniques of all categories: presentation methods (demonstration, use of board), participatory methods (discussion, questions) but also heuristic methods (working in groups, case study, role-playing). They further argue that they promote the cooperation and active involvement of learners, which is consistent with the principles of adult and student-centered learning and in line with the shift of university pedagogy towards the ideals, goals and methods of adult education as argued by many researchers (Toka & Gioti, 2021; Karalis, 2020; Valkanos et al., 2019; Karalis & Raikou, 2016; Raikou & Karalis, 2016). However, the responses of the students indicate that the most frequently used technique is that of enriched presentation, followed by frequency of use, discussion, lecture, and questions-answers; a finding that is in line with most of the studies presented in the paper (Nitsiou, 2018; Mulryan-Kyne, 2010; Lammers & Murphy, 2002; Sander, Stevenson, King and Coates, 2000; Ballantyne, Bain and Packer, 1999; Murray & McDonald, 1997; Gow & Kember, 1993; Gow, Kember & Sivan, 1992). Quite popular were brainstorming and working in groups. The dominance of enriched presentation is a matter of concern since the vast majority of students – are in agreement with relevant studies (Nitsiou, 2018; Pavlakis, Talias & Zannetos, 2016; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2007; Pappa & Thanopoulos, 2006) - consider the ability of teaching staff to apply active teaching techniques very important and their use is a prerequisite when teaching adults. For this reason, it is imperative to investigate the conditions that favor the use of techniques such as lectures and enriched presentations. To this end, it would be desirable to conduct focus group interviews where

faculty members could interact, stimulate colleagues, and possibly provide better information through this interaction (Creswell, 2016). Moreover, and since the learning process is an interaction between teachers and students, it would be meaningful to explore if students are prepared from their previous educational experiences to accept and utilize what teachers have to offer. Are they eager to expose themselves and actively participate in the learning process or are they settled in the safety and familiarity of lecture?

Overall, we see that a lot of the features of teaching are in line with the principles of student-centered and adult learning. However, it does not seem that the autonomy and ability of students to decide on their learning have been cultivated to the desirable degree. In addition, the most widely used technique is enriched presentation, which is undoubtedly better than the traditional lecture which is dominant in other studies; however, it is still one of the least active teaching techniques. So, it seems as though teachers understand the need for and have the intention of incorporating adult learning principles in their teaching and they do so, mostly as far as their relationship with their students is concerned; they claim, however, that there are factors that hinder their teaching efforts (poor organization, bureaucracy, overloaded administration work, lack of infrastructure), a finding in agreement with previous research (Toka & Gioti, 2021).

An important finding of the study is the fact that there was a statistically significant relationship between students' academic background/majors and the way they perceived teaching. Students who are teachers and have received pedagogical training tend to perceive it as teacher-centered while the rest (tourism and health program) as student-centered. This correlation is particularly important given that teachers have been trained in pedagogical methodology issues while studying in undergraduate curricula. Possibly their knowledge but also their professional involvement in the field of education makes them more rigorous and demanding judges in pedagogical issues than someone trained and working in the fields of tourism and health. To confirm and reinforce this correlation, quantitative research could be conducted where students from different disciplines would express their views on teaching.

Another issue to be noted is that of teacher training. In accordance with relevant studies (Rotidi et al., 2020; Nitsiou, 2018; Tzotzou & Bigilakis, 2013) most students in our research think that teaching staff training is needed while they declare satisfied with the teaching and the program in general. Why is this happening? Do students perceive learning as a dynamic process so that training is always relevant or is there a contradiction that needs to be explored?

However, it would be unfair to overlook the fact that most of the participants appear to be very satisfied with the curriculum and the teaching provided. It should be noted that most of the comments and complaints concerned the planning, the environment, the facilities, the cleanliness of the premises. The foregoing may not be relevant to the purpose of the research, but they are points that need attention as they create the context within which the learning process takes place and can have either a positive or a negative effect on it (noise in the communication).

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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