

## Teaching to learn from each other

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### Editorial

In Europe we have more than four dozen countries and many different health systems. To look across borders and to see how public health and health care is organized in our neighbour countries and what policies and interventions they employ can be a worthwhile exercise. Maybe our neighbours have already found a solution for a pressing health issue we still do not have any idea how to tackle.

Learning from one's neighbours asks for many things. First, one needs a certain mind-set: One has to understand and be aware that one is someone among others, that one might have developed approaches, knowledge and skills that can be exemplary – but also to be humble enough to recognize that one can learn from others who have established good practices. Second, however, one also needs methodological knowledge. One needs to be aware that not just any solution for a problem that works in one country or region can simply be transferred to another setting and adopted there. Structural or even only cultural aspects could prevent a successful transfer of a good practice from place A to place B. Thus, one also needs to know under what conditions learning from each other can be successful and what it takes to successfully implement practices that are considered to be good in other settings.

At the Faculty for Health, Medicine and Life Sciences at Maastricht University, the Netherlands, we work

with the “problem based learning approach”: every week students meet in groups of up to a dozen. Students work on cases or ‘problems’, as we call it. In these tutorials, which students chair themselves under supervision of a staff tutor, they have to define their own learning goals. These learning goals they develop by drawing on “crowd knowledge”: What do we already know about this problem, what do we need to know, how can we share research tasks to efficiently get the knowledge we need? Then, students go home or to the library, study for some days and come back together to share what they have learned about the goals they set themselves. By this approach, we want to teach an attitude of lifelong and mutual learning: Students learn to learn together and from each other. Thus, they learn to be equipped for the professional world while acquiring an attitude of lifelong learning that shall be beneficial in their future jobs (1).

In the Master of Science in European Public Health programme we take this perspective even one step further to the health systems level: In this programme we teach how one can learn from one another in health systems: The mission of this master programme is to help students obtain the skills and knowledge necessary to compare health and healthcare in various settings, to search for and identify good practices, to foster the transfer of good and best practices, and to implement and

monitor good practices in new situations (2).

Let us conclude, we can learn from our neighbours – in the classroom and in Europe, maybe even worldwide. Of course, we have to keep issues of transferability in mind – not all data, not all evidence, not all systems, not all interventions, not all policies that function well in country A can without further

modifications be adopted in country B. Yet, we should start creating the mind-set of mutual learning in our future public health professionals: that learning from each other is possible in principle and can be very effective and efficient. We do not have to reinvent the wheel and always learn solitarily from scratch. Let's join forces – in classrooms and across Europe.

## References

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