Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

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Intent of this contribution:

- To raise awareness of HEIs when **attempting paradigm shifts** towards SCL
  - Students, leadership, QA professionals, teaches…

- To raise awareness of the QA agencies and external evaluators when **evaluating** presence of SCL at HEIs

- To attempt the shift towards SCL as **opportunity for reflection and a learning experience**

- Map some **underlying assumptions, dangers and limitations**

Student-centred learning

A welcome paradigm shift from a teacher-centred approach

(www.semsdesign.me)

- Priority to SCL in (European-level) HE policies means

  more possibilities for much needed funding for

  - Teacher trainings (didactics, communication, use of IT for L&T)

  - Teaching tools and environments

  - Process of the paradigm shift (teachers, students, non-pedagogical staff, leadership)

  - The rest of support needed (HRM, organisational aspects)

- Useful opportunity to rethink the study process, programmes, and the L&T culture

Individual

Span: from biochemistry to society at large

- Are we up to date with the neuroscience?
e.g. neuroplasticity of the brain
attention span...

- Influence of the socioeconomic background

e.g. basic assumptions influencing whether one is allowed to succeed, follow aspirations

What:
knowledge, skills, values? All?

(www.iupui.edu)

- Student – teacher
- Individual – group (peers)
- Relational!

(The Institute of Progressive Education and Learning)

- Study process through time ……………
  - One course
  - Study programe
  - …

AND…

- Evaluation and Q development
- Organisational level (support, policy, governance)

(www.calmar.com)

SCL - widely accepted concept

Proactive students, developing knowledge, choosing their learning paths…

- A **very vague notion**, undefined concept (Everybody can fill in the blanks?)

  - A **problem of scale** (Which level are we talking about?)
  - „a **mind-set** and a **culture** within a given HEI" (ESU&EI 2010)

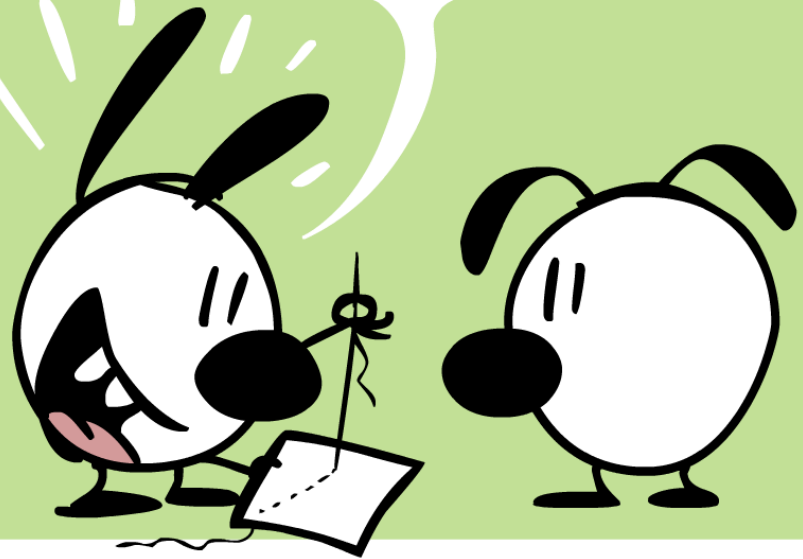# Which values do we want to strengthen by implementing SCL? (I)

Human capital model of learning (e.g. OECD)

- Promoting competition
- Promoting use of IT to develop flexible environment for continuous learning and pursuing jobs
- Promoting privatisation of HE (financing as well as governance of HEIs)
- Education viewed as a „private good", a „commodity"
- Skilled and competent individual viewed as a form of „capital" (for (national) prosperity) (Regmi 2015, 147)
- Efficiency

Critique

- In service of corporations
- No use to those who lag behind
- Widening the gap between those who can afford the education and those who cannot

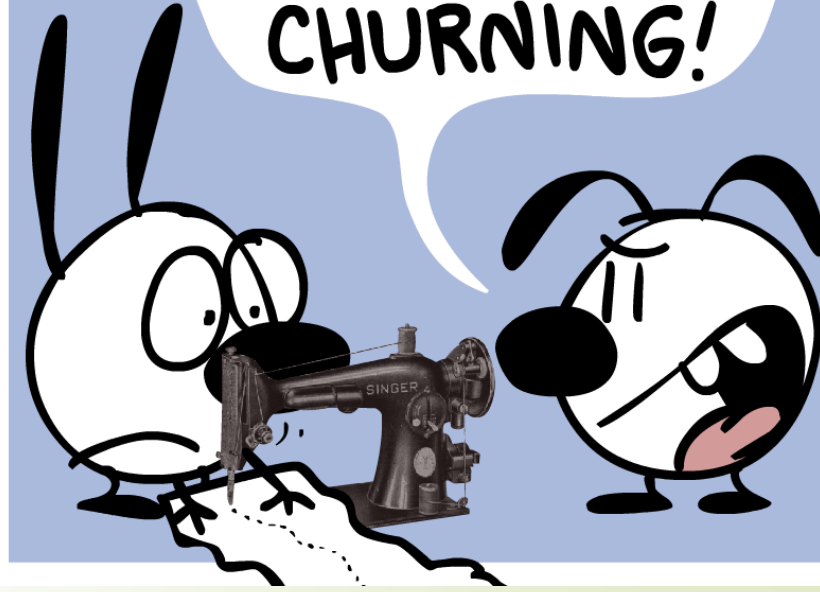# Which values do we want to strengthen by implementing SCL? (II)

Humanistic model of learning (e.g. UNESCO)

- Promotion of citizen education, active citizenship, developing ability to fight against oppression and domination

- Building social capital by strengthening cooperation, collaboration and coordination amongst citizens

- Enhancing collective learning, shared knowledge becomes a "public good"

- Intrinsic value of education as a necessity for enhancing human capability

(Regmi 2015, 147)

- More acceptable, however…

- Promoting view of the global north, in practice less used in global south

SCL – complex or simple?

Great to have more attention….

However….regarding SCL as a standard to implement is suggesting we might underestimate the complexity of this paradigm shift
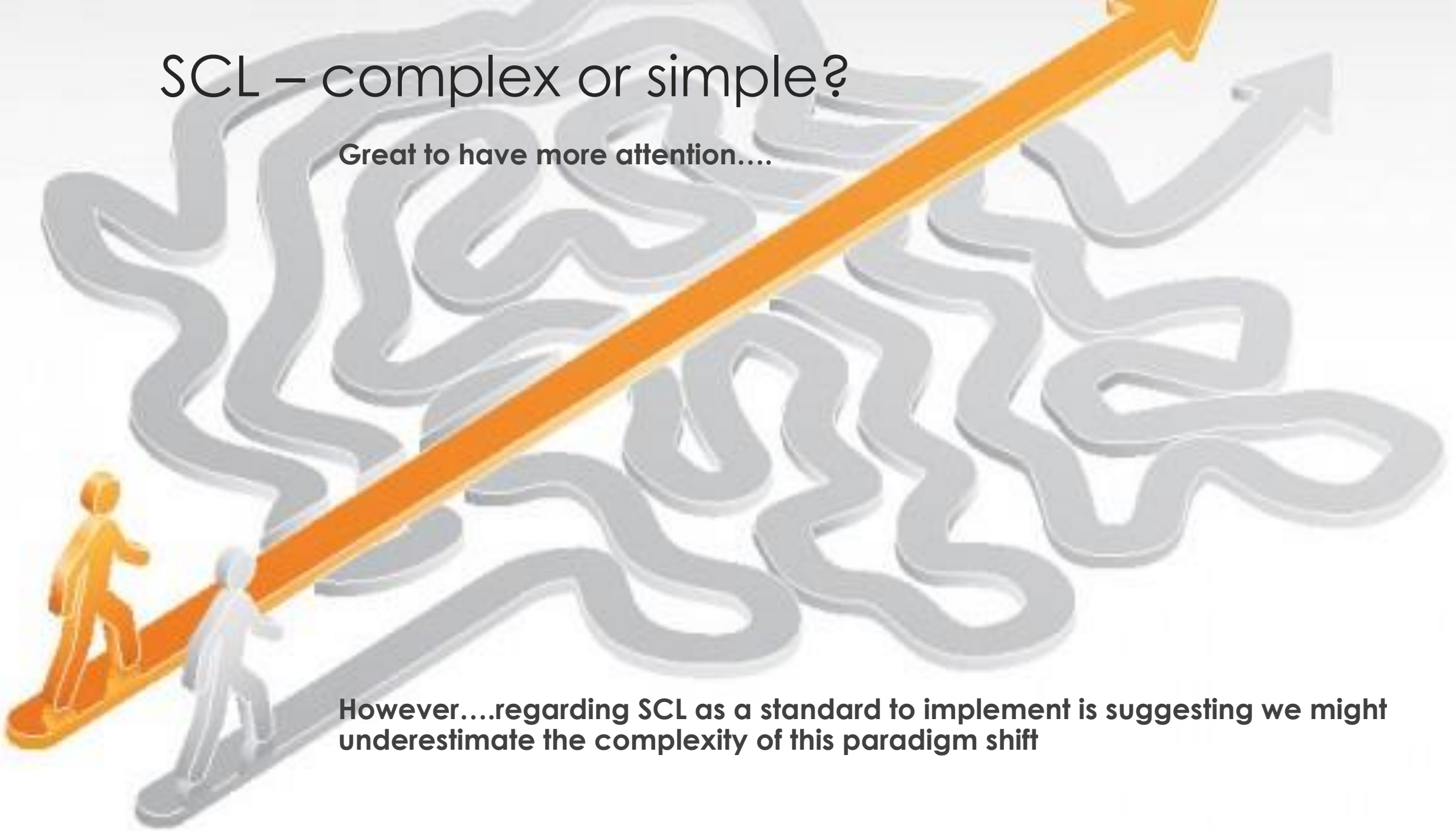
L&T culture, SCL as a culture

- Culture is very stable, develops through time as the organisation faces and learns from challenges (Schein 2010, 18).

- For changing it, a group or an organisation needs a meaningful learning experience.

- Attempting paradigm shifts in L&T as a meaningful learning experience would influence the culture to shift

- Thus SCL could be a good GOAL, an ideal for the HEI (not a standard)

SCL as a standard?

- Means demanding the culture to change, which suggest:
  - simplification
  - lack of awareness that new instructions don't bring change
  - mistake in categorisation of the challenge (regarding it as a problem of logic with one right and known answer, as well as having enough resources to achieve the solution) (Lewis, 2008)
  - Regarding teachers and study process as something that needs „fixing"
- Stirs up ideas in some countries to put SCL into the legislation.

Similarly, Sursock (2006) emphasises:

 "Evaluation approaches that are based on standards, quantitative methods, set of criteria, or checklist will not improve quality meaningfully".

Some questions to help the reflection

- Are there different understandings of SCL? Is there (some) shared understanding)?

- What concept of SCL do we find meaningful for our HEI? (inline with our values, needs and goals in study process)?

- How would this change our study process? How would it look in practice?

- What do we need to make this happen?

- Who are the people already taking the initiative? (possible learning from that and empowerment)

- How can we invite more students and teachers?

- How can we support students to gradually take on more active role?

- What are the possible dangers and pitfalls?

How to avoid performance and spectacle in the classroom?

- Masschelein (2013) is proposing to rethink the roles of teachers and students, and to ask **"how to turn a text, a virus or a river into a cause for thinking"** by asking a series of questions with these goals

  - Creating closeness to be able to think „in the presence of"

  - Creating space for engaging into collective study

  - Architecture of studies to bring student together

  - Use of new information and communication technologies to provoke thinking, to develop new pedagogic forms

  - Study programme design!

Dangers and pitfalls to avoid (I)

- Over-emphasising student interest, choice and feed-back („less academic" student choosing „less academic" class)

  - **Perpetuating the stereotypes and inequalities in society**

  Structures do not simply contain the person, they are part of the person and operate through the person" (Bourdieu &Wacquant, 1992)

  - Relying on student proactivity hinders necessary challenges in the study process, as well as readiness of students to try out something new, that at first doesn't make sense, or is not interesting.

  - Changing the role of the teachers (fulfilling student wishes, one-way communication instead of support to the development into autonomous learners)

- Version of SCL viewing students as customers (human capital model)

Dangers and pitfalls (II)

➡ Teachers/HEIs assuming

too much responsibility for students' success

Role of the teacher
Role of the students

Learning Environment

(e.g. How to engage students?
(participatory learning, in flipped classroom))

If you are not willing to learn, no one can help you. If you are determined to learn, no one can stop you.

Important when **introducing/enhancing SCL**

- Using SCL as an opportunity for reflection and learning experience
- Not to expect fast changes and results (culture, resources)
- Trust-building (S-T; L-T…)
- Empowerment (especially students and teachers)
  - Trainings are impacting student outcomes the most amongst organisational actions towards SCL (Robinson 2012)
- Avoid uncritical implementation of practices, rather learn from them

Important when **evaluating SCL**

- Efforts to understand the L&T culture

- Awareness that resorces are needed for change

- Looking for elements of SCL (not „label" of SCL)

- Avoid mixing it up with flat hierarchy (though it might help the shift towards SCL)

Patience! Significant cultural change often happens slowly (Hodkinson, 2007)

Alternatives to SCL?

e.g. University as a vibrant learning community

Photo: IFP d.o.o.