

## Article #7

# ISU PROFESSORS LEAD WORKSHOPS ON LEARNING-CENTERED CLASSES FOR KOSOVAN PROFESSORS

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<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1wiOJegr8OgpCBe56Bv4vx6yJI5rdL6GQ>

The Private Sector Partnerships to Strengthen Higher Education activity, funded by USAID and implemented by the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and the Kosova Education Center (KEC), is dedicated to equipping public university staff in Kosovo with the necessary tools, systems, and expertise to effectively prepare Agriculture and ICT students for the job market. As part of this initiative, renowned professors Dr. Jan Wiersema and Dr. Curt Youngs from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Iowa State University (ISU) facilitated a series of training workshops on delivering Learning-Centered Classes to university students.

*"I am thrilled to bring my esteemed colleague, Dr. Jan Wiersema from ISU, to facilitate a workshop on innovative teaching methods. It has been eight years since I had the honor of attending Jan's transformative course on Learning-Centered Classes, which played a pivotal role in re-shaping my instructional approach as a professor. I look forward to extending this incredible opportunity to our fellow professors in Kosovo, enabling them to benefit from Jan's expertise and further enrich their teaching practices."* – **Dr. Curt Youngs, Agriculture Specialist for the Activity and Morrill Professor at Iowa State University.**

These workshops, spanning two days each, were hosted separately at each partner university of the activity: Prishtina, Peja, and Prizren. The participants included professors, senior trainers from the Centers of Teaching Excellence, and university administrative staff from the ICT and Agriculture departments.

The training sessions focused on theories of learning and teaching, providing an opportunity for participants to critically examine their beliefs about learning. Engaging in various activities, they were encouraged to reflect on their own thinking and learning processes. By experiencing learner-centered strategies firsthand, the participants explored the implications and practical applications in designing effective learning experiences for students.

*"The workshop was incredibly useful! It provided us with collective insights on leading student learning. In today's fast-paced world, where student attention spans are increasingly shorter, engaging them and fostering critical thinking in the classroom has become a massive challenge for professors worldwide. Therefore, having the opportunity to learn about activities, techniques, and strategies to incorporate into our teaching agendas to enhance student engagement is truly appreciated. We are fortunate to collaborate with experienced scholars from Iowa State University to address the challenge of student focus and promote effective learning. Their expertise is invaluable!"*- **Shyhrete Muriqi, Teaching Assistant, Faculty of Agribusiness, University Haxhi Zeka, Peja.**

*"The highlight of this workshop was the emphasis on creating a strong classroom community. I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to discover new techniques, methodologies, and*

*effective practices that promote strong teacher-student relationships, thereby cultivating an optimal environment for collective learning. The workshop has genuinely inspired me to enhance my teaching approach, enabling students to engage in deeper thinking and unlocking their critical thinking abilities, creativity, and freedom of expression."*-**Blerta Mehmedi Kastrati, Assistant Professor at University of Prishtina, Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary**

*"Attending this workshop was a delightful experience. As a dedicated professor and trainer at the Center for Teaching Excellence at the University of Prizren, I am constantly seeking ways to train academic staff in enhancing their teaching methods to effectively engage and educate students. Professor Jan's advice on shifting our focus from improving our teaching to facilitating critical thinking and learning resonated with me. The practices we explored during the workshop will have a lasting impact on my approach, enabling me to design classes that make way for more efficient collaborative learning and critical thinking among students"* – **Mirvjena Kortoçi, Associate Professor at University of Prizren, Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences.**

These workshops mark a significant step forward in enhancing the pedagogical capabilities of the public university staff involved in the activity. The Private Sector Partnerships to Strengthen Higher Education activity is committed to fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange between public Universities in Kosovo, Iowa State University and the University of Iowa, ensuring that students in the fields of Agriculture and ICT receive the best possible preparation for success in the job market.

*"It requires a lifetime of dedication to master the art and science of helping others learn. Similar to cognitive psychology researchers who constantly strive to unravel the mysteries of human thinking, educators are perpetual learners, always seeking to enhance their understanding of how to facilitate and guide the learning process effectively. Having had the opportunity to work alongside professors in Kosovo, I was deeply inspired by their motivation and determination to serve their students by caring for and about each individual. Witnessing their willingness to embark on a lifelong journey of revisiting and refining their teaching plans and strategies, with the goal of creating engaging, inspiring, and purposeful learning experiences for their students, filled me with immense joy and satisfaction."* – **Dr. Jan Wiersema, Associate Teaching Professor, ISU**