

Institutional Policies, a Key to Foster Quality Teaching

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Improving quality teaching in higher education requires institution-wide policies, aimed at spurring teachers' innovation and assisting them through adequate learning environment and professional development. Incentives are key to foster teachers' commitment in quality teaching as well as to involve students as co-producers of their own learning. Evaluation systems should furthermore be expanded and combine quantitative and qualitative instruments with the objective to encompassing the complexity of quality in higher education.

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For your convenience, all articles have already been organised by chapter and subchapter online at www.lg-handbook.info. This article, D 8-3, has been assigned to:

Chapter D: Leading a Higher Education Institution: Issues, Tools, Practices
Subchapter 8: Quality Assessment and Enhancement

Introduction: Why is Quality Teaching important?

Emphasis on research performance – for both institutions and individual academics – has traditionally overshadowed teaching. Research is emphasised because research performance drives the highest performing academics and doctoral students, allows commercialisation and dissemination through patents and spin-offs, attracts extra funding, benefits the institution's reputation and above all safeguards the distinctive feature of universities in the diverse arena of higher education (Hénard 2010, p. 63). Institutional decision-making bodies tend to ignore the need to improve quality teaching in higher education and might even consider it incidental (see Hénard, p 10). They are likely to hire high-level researchers as lecturers and offer a wide range of scholarship activities and lab research opportunities, while in the meantime minimising emphasis or even neglecting altogether the teaching process. Understandably, academics themselves place a very high value on research and are often acutely under the “publish or perish” pressure: They may worry that teaching would undermine research and hence undermine a successful career path (Hénard & Roseveare 2012, p. 13).

However, quality teaching has become an important issue with the changes in the higher education environment in recent decades. Higher education has to respond to the varied needs of a growing number of students, to greater diversification and specialisation, to massive changes in technology and sciences that enable new forms of delivery, and to the ever-changing real world that we live in. At the same time, the employment market is becoming more competitive and more demanding as regards skills, knowledge, values and attributes of students. Quality teaching would be the answer to all of these challenges.

Investing in quality teaching would have positive impacts on institutions, teachers, and students. Teaching is one of the core missions and hence a core responsibility of universities (HLGMHE 2013, p. 13) as recalled by the High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education set by the European Union. Quality teaching initiatives thus would first and foremost enable institutions to accomplish their mission and confirm their *raison d'être*. Quality teaching would also foster a culture of quality in general (teaching, learning, and research) that enables institutions to adapt to the needs and changes of the society as mentioned above and sustainably progress and develop.

For teachers, quality teaching helps them to better understand the content of the university's teaching mission and their own duties in putting this mission into practice. Through quality teaching programmes, teachers would gain a clearer understanding of the aims pursued by teaching in higher education beyond their own knowledge area, clarify their role as an individual and as a component of a collective mission, and engage more deeply in quality teaching activities (Hénard 2010,

p. 13). Quality teaching initiatives could lighten their burden, sustain motivation and job satisfaction.

And last but not least, students would be the direct “beneficiaries” of successful quality teaching programmes. In short-term perspective, quality teaching would make learning a much more interesting experience for students (and teaching for teachers). In the medium term, quality teaching leads to learning outcomes and, above all, added value for them. Students would be prepared and equipped with the knowledge, competencies, skills and expertise needed for the workplace. On the long run, it would encourage students to develop positive values and attitudes such as confidence in their capacities, a strong sense of responsibility and community engagement, and lifelong learning (which are totally relevant to teachers as well) (HLGMHE 2013, p. 13).

For all those reasons, all institutions, from research-intensive universities through community colleges to vocational institutes, etc., are expected to deliver quality teaching. However, this is an easy statement to make, but a difficult reality to accomplish. Higher education institutions are complex organisations under pressure from many different directions. Moreover, the complexity and uncertainty of society and the economy require educational institutions to continuously adapt while upholding quality standards. Although difficult, quality teaching can be achieved by institutions/education systems taking giant steps, or simply by individuals doing the everyday things better (HLGMHE 2013, p. 22).

1. Quality teaching: how to translate a concept into a policy?

The first step towards quality teaching should consist of defining an institutional policy on quality. This implies to first agree on a common definition of quality teaching, and to develop a quality culture in the institution. In order to ensure consistency, other policies will need to be aligned and contribute to quality teaching.

1.1 Agree on a shared definition of quality teaching

Before trying to define a policy and to implement changes, an institution must define what it regards as teaching excellence as well as the expected profile of graduates. This means clarifying the meaning of quality teaching from an institutional point of view. It may seem remote from quality enhancement tools and practical considerations, but it can be useful to set the grounds and to ensure the entire community shares a vision. It can also stimulate critical reflection about teaching, and engage the individuals in reflective practice. In return, implement-

**Shared vision
of quality teaching**

Involve the whole community in the definition of quality teaching?

ing actions for quality enhancement can be an opportunity to question the meaning of teaching, and of quality teaching in particular.

As there is no given definition and there may co-exist various perceptions of quality teaching within the academic community of an institution, it is vital to reach a common understanding upon quality teaching. In order to develop institution-wide vision, assumptions and vocabulary, the entire community should participate in developing the definition of quality teaching (institution leaders, faculty, administrative staff, and students). Teachers indeed have a crucial role in defining what quality is, and can provide a conceptual reflection. Students should also provide their vision of quality teaching and identify what it means to them. A common definition will help develop a quality culture and ensure that all members embrace quality teaching. External stakeholders could also be asked to provide input as to what learning outcomes are desirable in higher education graduates, both in terms of generic and subject specific competences.

1.2 Raise awareness and develop a quality culture

The emphasis on research excellence has caused some institutions and individuals to neglect the quality of teaching. Raising awareness about it and developing an institution-wide quality culture is thus a prerequisite for quality enhancement. Initiatives have more chances to succeed in environments where quality and teaching are highly valued. But policies, initiatives, activities and the feedback from their assessment are also levers for fostering an institution's quality culture.

Setting the grounds is a process that can take long before an institution-wide strategy emerges, thus an iterative approach should be adopted.

Develop an institutional quality culture

There are many ways of raising awareness and developing an institutional quality culture:

- Communicate about it widely and continually;
- Explicitly affirm the importance of teaching and exhibit institutional commitment (in mission statement, institutional policies, political agenda, etc.);
- Advocate quality teaching and explain why a quality culture is needed;
- Disseminate information and ensure teachers know the institutional policy;
- Take every opportunity to initiate discussions at different levels;
- Support the scholarship of teaching;

- Create a coalition of leaders;
- Involve all actors and listen to their point of view;
- Highlight some quick successes in making improvements, and do not rest on laurels;
- Engage in networks to give exposure to your achievements and have an impact on the institutional image (recognition through accreditation, attraction of international students and teachers, partnerships with companies, etc.).

Leaders and decision-making bodies have a crucial role to play in shaping the quality culture of an institution. They often are the initiators of a focus on teaching, and they should provide sustained commitment. Other actors should be involved to promote a sense of ownership and to convey the relevance of the initiatives to the whole community. The culture of an institution cannot be changed through a centralised and top-down approach. The success of a quality culture depends on heads of departments' and teachers' acceptance, which are vital. Teachers also have a central role in reflecting on their own practice. Raising teachers' awareness of their pedagogical role and strengthening the links between teaching and research can also fuel quality culture. Finally, students are a force for raising problems, launching discussions, and bringing new ideas.

Institutional leaders have a key role to play ... but other actors, too

1.3 Set quality as an objective and define a policy

The commitment to quality teaching should be reflected in the mission statement and in the set of core values of an institution. Setting quality teaching as a strategic objective is at the same time a symbolic way to signal the institution's commitment and the first step to a strategic approach to quality.

Set an objective ...

In the international context of adopting more strategic approaches to higher education institutions' development, a growing number of institutions are adopting explicit objectives and operational planning regarding quality. The purpose of such an institutional policy is to give consistency to the previous isolated initiatives and experiments that emanated at individual or department level.

... translate it into policy and planning ...

Institutions should establish an institution-wide teaching and learning framework, and align the teaching and learning process as well as student assessment to the framework. Such an institution-wide framework should:

... and establish a framework

- Reflect the mission(s) and values of the institution;
- Define the objectives of teaching and the expected learning outcomes;

- Be easily adaptable by each faculty member;
- Ensure that specific frameworks at department, school or programme level are consistent with the institution-wide one;
- Be defined by the entire community, and include their viewpoints in order to ensure shared understanding.

1.4 Align other policies with quality teaching policy

Coherence across policies

Stratified policies, department policies and individual initiatives can prevent the emergence of institution-wide synergies. For example, a career development policy for teaching staff that over-emphasises scientific publication can undermine commitment to teaching. It is thus necessary to ensure coherence across policies and to make sure peripheral policies support the enhancement of quality.

Tools to ensure consistency of other policies with the objective of quality enhancement include:

- Identifying the impact of each policy in terms of quality;
- Reviewing policies regularly in order to detect inconsistencies;
- Assessing the consistency of departmental and programme policies with the institution-wide framework;
- Benchmarking policy coherence with similar organisations.

Supporting policies include HR, learning environment, information technologies

Many institutional policies may have an impact on quality teaching. The human resources policy must ensure that recruitment, remuneration, career progression, faculty workload and pedagogical competencies are in line with the needs of quality teaching. The learning environment also needs to support quality enhancement: adequate and adaptable premises are needed for new types of delivery and for enhancing exchanges of knowledge. A last example are information and computing technology policies: institutions may assess the impact and added value of IT in teaching, develop faculty's IT skills, use intranet discussion forums to share best practices, and match technical aspects with the needs of quality monitoring and evaluation. Other areas include student support, internationalisation, R&D, finances, etc.

Ghent University, Belgium

Ghent University has introduced a new career model for promotion to full professor. Teachers can now personalise their goals, on either research, or teaching, or service to society. Research is still obligatory, but not necessarily emphasised as strongly as before. Academic staff can propose the amount of time and effort dedicated to research as they see fit to their goals. This has been intended to refocus on teaching, by awarding teaching/educational efforts more. Teachers no longer feel that devoting time and effort to teaching would undermine their research capacity and promotion chances.

2. Lead the change: an institutional organisation to implement the quality teaching policy

An institution-wide policy demonstrates that an institution has the legitimacy to intervene in a field traditionally left to individual teachers. To support the implementation of this policy, clear mandates and responsibilities need to be defined. In addition, a specific structure can be created to coordinate quality enhancement.

2.1 Coordinate actors and map responsibilities

Only the institution can adopt a holistic view and ensure the entire academic community is involved. The objective of such institutional oversight is to streamline the various initiatives that are developed at departmental or at individual level. The sum of individual initiatives is not sufficient to ensure an overall improvement of quality teaching. The role of the institution is thus to provide support, promote good practices, and scale them up. Institutional overseeing is also necessary to assess the impacts and needs through policy monitoring and evaluation.

Institutional oversight

In a global approach, the leadership within the higher education institution has a crucial role to play. Leaders' support, commitment and engagement are key factors for the success of a quality teaching policy. They are in a position to coordinate the process, clarify complaints, streamline requests and ensure the provision of adequate support.

Lead the change

The governance system should be easily identifiable by everyone, especially faculty members. The institution must distribute roles and clearly define their content and scope. It is a given that quality is a complex issue and therefore its responsibility should not rely on a

Map responsibilities

single person, but be collaborative. The teaching and learning responsibilities should be mapped in order to identify which actors are in a position to successfully implement the policy and to produce significant changes. Responsibilities in terms of quality can be assigned to institutional leaders, heads of departments, programme leaders and directors of supporting services. The institution must foster their leadership competencies and provide the resources and tools needed to the exertion of their responsibilities. Attractive career paths should be offered to these leaders in order to foster their commitment. Finally, a reporting system must be set for the staff in charge in order to make the institution accountable for quality.

At departmental level

The commitment of heads of department is a key factor for success. They are the main drivers for operational implementation; and they are the ones able to engage teachers. They need to be able to customise the implementation of the institutional framework and tailor it to their department, especially in big multidisciplinary institutions. They will thus need support staff in this mission. Facilitating discussions between departments can allow circulation of information and good practices.

2.2 Set up a specific unit in charge of quality

A specific unit in charge of quality, with a focus on teaching and learning ...

In addition to a governance system, a growing number of institutions set up a cross-departmental structure to support the strategic objective of quality teaching. The aim of such a “teaching and learning development centre” is to mainstream the preoccupation for quality in the institution’s routine (and not only occasionally upon external pressure such as accreditation).

... with several missions ...

A specific unit can be established with wide responsibilities and authority in terms of advocacy, coordination, support, research and monitoring and evaluation. These can include:

- Advocating the importance of quality teaching;
- Ensuring the institutional policy is understood and implemented;
- Promoting and disseminating quality culture;
- Fostering communication between teaching and support services;
- Supporting teachers, providing resources, tools and instruments;
- Having research activities (in order to ensure evidence-based support) and a conceptual reflection role;
- Being open to external inputs and good practices;

- Developing innovative methods for measuring and evaluating quality;
- Providing feedback to the leaders and help them understand the needs of the faculty.

The newly created service can be vulnerable and criticised by the reluctant community. Therefore it needs visibility, legitimacy, and explicit support from policy-makers. It can be useful to grant the unit official status in the organisational chart, and to place it under direct authority of the rector or the leader of academic affairs.

... and specific needs

In order not to be an empty shell, the unit will also need a clear scope, qualified staffing and sufficient funding. It needs to have clear responsibilities, reporting procedures, and an effective position in the university in order to coordinate all actors. Human and financial resources are critical. They must be allocated according to the importance given to quality enhancement. A single person cannot undertake diverse functions and be in touch with all departments and services.

3. Enforce quality teaching within the institutions

Quality enhancement processes are diverse in nature: some are top-down while others emerge from grassroots, some concern the whole university while others are relevant for a single teacher, etc. In order to adapt to such diversity, incentives have greater impact than regulation and coercion. Institutions must develop a climate for change by encouraging initiatives and by providing support to all actors. This responsibility can be given to the specific unit.

3.1 Encourage grassroots initiatives

Initiatives that remain at individual or department level may be inconsistent with regard to the institutional framework. Furthermore, bottom-up initiatives are stillborn if they do not earn the governing bodies' support. In order to encourage both teachers and students to experiment and innovate, the institution should develop a framework or guidelines to foster innovation in teaching. Small signs of recognition are also important. They may take the form of support from the specific unit, half-day release of normal workload, rewards to innovative staff, etc. In order to upscale successful experiments, the institution has a role to play in following up, monitoring, capitalising and disseminating practices. Platforms can also be developed to exchange knowledge and share good practices.

Encourage initiatives and upscale successful experiments

3.1.1 Incentives for quality teaching

The fact that promotion or other benefits do not often follow from good performance in teaching can be accounted for by four major reasons. First, it is harder to establish a definition of good teaching than to establish a definition of good research. Second, it is difficult to collect evidence of good teaching that would enable good teachers to receive recognition for their efforts. Third, until recently there have been few incentives for staff to devote time and energy to the pursuit of excellence in teaching. Fourth, because of institutional rhetoric, teaching is often viewed as a duty (Hénard 2010, p. 95).

Institutions should make support for quality teaching explicit. A clear and transparent system of promotion, salaries, funding, awards, etc. would prove the legitimation and determination of institution leaders in making teaching a core mission. Those would also be incentives for teachers to be more motivated to strike for quality teaching as their efforts are recognised.

3.1.2 Encouraging innovation

Quality teaching initiatives should encourage experimentation and innovation in teaching practices, while recognising that experiments that fail are also important learning opportunities (Hénard & Roseveare 2012, p. 33).

Importantly, there needs to be a right balance between top-down institution-wide framework and “academic freedom” that allows teachers to be creative and innovative. Top-down quality teaching initiatives could be perceived as interference and encroachment of academic freedom as teaching is traditionally left to individual teachers. The institutions thus should demonstrate the added value of their institutional policies, that those policies could help faculty to teach more efficiently (Hénard 2010, p. 42). Institutions should design an institutional policy to foster quality teaching by letting departments or individual teachers operate on their own and at the same time ensuring that their teaching meets the requirements of the institutional objectives reflected in the policy (Hénard 2010, p. 51)

3.2 Provide adequate support

Institution-wide support is key to help teachers commit into quality teaching.

3.2.1 Capacity building by training and continuing education for teachers

The need for professional training as a teacher at primary and secondary school level is generally taken for granted but when it comes to higher education there seems to be an all too common assumption that such professional teacher training is not necessary (HLGMHE 2013, p. 18).

But in reality, teachers in higher education also need professional training and capacity building just like those in primary and secondary school. Merely providing subject-specific knowledge is not a sufficient condition of quality teaching. The job market requires interdisciplinarity, soft skills, and many other values and attributes from students. However, academics might be experts in their field but not necessarily trained in pedagogy and thus not necessarily good teachers.

Institutions have the responsibility to provide teachers with opportunities for continuous professional development from their early years in the profession throughout their career, in order to ensure that they are well trained and qualified as professional teachers and not just qualified as subject-specific experts. However, it is also academic staff's own responsibility to be qualified to teach and be able to teach well. Therefore they must prepare and equip themselves with the capacities needed to take on this key role. This responsibility extends over their entire career from start to finish so that they remain up-to-date and proficient in the very best pedagogical practices, and all that excellence in teaching requires (HLGMHE 2013, p. 15). A good teacher thus must also be an active learner, questioner and critical thinker. The institution, for its part, should provide teachers with the necessary incentives, opportunities, means and resources to remain up to date in pedagogical matters and constantly improve their teaching skills.

3.2.2 Exchanges and dissemination of information

The quality of dialogue is crucial for successful dissemination on quality teaching. The progress of quality teaching initiatives is mainly due to the collaboration of those who participated and were asked to share what they had done regarding quality teaching. The motivation of teachers is sustained when they can reflect on their own work. The institution, together with the heads of departments, must promote such windows (Hénard 2010, p. 76).

Exchanges should take place among teachers themselves, at the same time with leaders and policy-makers, with students, and external actors (e.g. employers). This multi-stakeholders dialogue would encourage new ideas from different perspectives and thus would enable a more comprehensive quality teaching approach.

3.2.3 Support for the teaching environment

Actions meant to improve technological facilities, equipment, materials are also important to help new pedagogies and assist students in learning better and faster. Such actions should however be strongly connected to institution-wide policies, otherwise they will not impact on the quality. Strategies in facilities, IT equipment and classroom layout are thus necessary. It is not just about purchasing computers or repainted classroom walls. Expanding innovative pedagogies, involving students into their teaching, enhancing teachers commitment in quality require institution-wide strategies.

3.2.4 Support students

A need for clear targets and institutional policies

Research increasingly addresses the impact of Quality teaching initiatives. Barrie, Ginns and Prosser (2005) found that students' personal perceptions of the learning environment impacts (on) their learning: students tend to adopt a deeper approach to learning, a more coherent and integrated understanding of the course material, if they perceive that the teaching of a given course is of good quality..

Most institutions put considerable efforts into providing the best possible service to their students. However most of their actions are not enshrined in clear-cut objectives of proper policies (Hénard 2010, p. 72), are not coordinated, and are not part of a long-term vision. Rather, they are the results of periodic reviews which focus on the existing issues and not on possible remediation.

Actions to undertake include

- Embed policies on student support in the teaching and learning framework;
- Increase institutional awareness of the learning strategies implemented in departments;
- Ensure they are aligned with the institution's teaching and learning framework.

“Students as Quality Producers”, at UoL

The University of Lincoln (UK), has developed a Student Engagement Strategy for the period 2012-2016 (OECD 2014, p. 15). It aims at involving students more in the overall evaluation process, which helps move the focus from teaching to learning. These strategy and vision are made possible thanks to the engagement of the various stakeholders: the senior management, the students, the academic and support departments. It stimulates academic environment for all as all actors are more committed and involved.

Promoting student engagement and learning communities is likely to enhance the quality of student learning. For instance group work has proven to be an efficient learning tool which helps students gain a deeper understanding of a subject through interaction with their peers. The quality of the learning environment relies on some key characteristics, such as the transparency of the goals of the course and homework, the adequacy in pace and difficulty between the level of the class and of the students, the opportunities for in-class participation, and the availability of the teacher (Ellet *et al.* 1997).

Efforts towards quality teaching enhancement should follow a more systematic view which moves away from teacher-centered standards, and encompasses students’ initiatives and perspectives.

Actions to undertake include:

- Identify special learner types and provide specific provisions as well as personalised study plans;
- Provide induction programmes to students unfamiliar with the goals and philosophy underpinning new paradigms of teaching and learning.

The Aalto Learning Hub

Aalto University in Finland focus on implementing innovation in higher education. Co-creation, crossing borders and entrepreneurial approach are characteristics of reforms in learning and teaching. Aalto Learning Hubs are learning spaces, which can be described as a combination of a workspace and living room, making them a place to study together but also a social meeting point (OECD 2014, p. 22). The students take part in the design and setting up of the facilities, which gives them the opportunity to re-use their various backgrounds and to emphasise students’ role to take responsibility for learning hubs.

**Supporting and
promoting pedagogical
innovation**

4. Monitoring and Evaluation: how to make the institution accountable for quality?

Evaluation helps teachers to understand their strengths and weaknesses, the gains and progress to be made in order to benefit students' learning.

Programme evaluation evaluates programme content, structure and teaching delivery (other aspects might be included like learning environment).

Self-assessment is an important tool for teachers. It allows teachers to reflect on their own teaching and take steps to improve. Peers review is equally useful. It not only allows teachers to receive feedback from their colleagues, but also provides opportunities to exchange lessons learned and best practices among teachers

4.1 Create an institution-wide evaluation system

The difficulty in appraising quality

Even though institutions recognise the need for appraisal, many of them struggle to measure teaching quality and to assess the impact of teaching inputs on learning outcomes. Yet monitoring and evaluating the actions implemented can contribute to demonstrate the institution's commitment to quality and to make the institution accountable for learning outcomes.

An institution-wide approach

Internal monitoring and evaluation should be carried out at institutional level. Individuals often fail to appraise the impact of their initiatives. Therefore, institution-wide evaluation of teaching initiatives and of the levers used to foster quality teaching is needed. Furthermore, the institution should coordinate the evaluations carried out at department and programme levels and ensure consistent amalgamation of results. The evaluation process must be simplified. The objectives assigned to quality teaching initiatives are often too broad and should be more realistic and clear in order to simplify their monitoring and evaluation. The evaluation should also refer to the institution's definition of quality.

Evaluation structures and staff

Institution-wide evaluation processes should be coordinated by a visible and responsible service unit in order to guarantee the quality of the process. This service (or specific unit) must have the proper staff and skills needed to collect, process and interpret the data. Generally, evaluation should not be a side-activity but the cornerstone of the institutional quality teaching policy. It thus needs to involve all staff and students.

Institutions often face the lack of reliable instruments for evaluating quality. Going beyond simple input and activity indicators, some institutions are trying to design more qualitative instruments. Opinion surveys, both directed to students and teachers, can encompass multiple aspects and criteria. Some institutions also use triangulation of sources to ensure consistency of evaluation results.

**Instruments
and indicators**

The team in charge of evaluation should develop indicators as well as instruments for data collection and interpretation.

Even though existing evaluations deliver results, limited use is usually made of them. The institution needs to provide assistance in the interpretation of the results to ensure consistent interpretation, and in the formulation or recommendations. In order to make the institution accountable for quality outcomes, it should also monitor the implementation of the recommendations and the changes in teachers' role, pedagogy, programme design, and the learning environment.

**Interpretation and
impact of evaluation
results**

The evaluation process can also have an impact on the quality culture of the institution. It helps to promote a climate of continuous reflection on teaching practices. This supposes to foster the evaluation as a formative assessment. The institution can also develop a climate open to innovation, dissemination of good practices, and collaborative learning. Research-type activities have a role to play to this regard. Developing a scholarship of teaching and benchmarking with other institutions or international guidelines can also help to strengthen the institution as a learning organisation.

**Become a learning
organisation**

4.2 Engage students in the evaluation process

Involving students in the evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning can be a powerful driver, as they are the prime beneficiaries and targets of an institution's teaching and learning activities. Yet other stakeholders may be reluctant to engage students in criticising academic-related matters, and students themselves may be dubious about the added-value of their contributions and believe that their views will be ignored (Hénard & Roseveare 2012, p. 21), even though they are already continuously assessing their learning experience. Therefore, obtaining constructive feedback may be difficult, and needs to be encouraged. Students' contribution to quality teaching and evaluation thus depends strongly on the willingness and the capacity of their institution to involve them in the process.

Advocates of students questionnaires point out that this tool is relevant because it identifies the opinions of those who are most exposed to the teaching of the professors, and who are those most concerned with its level of achievement. Yet student questionnaires can be a double-edged sword, as teachers may have little faith in them, or adopt short-term strategies that may induce students to answer questionnaires fa-

**Quantitative indicators
have their limits ...**

... and should be coupled to qualitative feedback

avourably but that may negatively influence the quality of teaching and not help students in the long run. The employment rate of alumni and graduates is often used as an indicator of a programme quality, yet this does not account for macro-economic factors such as employment disparities between rural or urban areas, discriminations against minority groups or hiring patterns.

Quantitative indicators may be unable to reflect reality or to collect relevant and useful feedback. Institutions should thus opt for more qualitative and discussion-inducing evaluation methods (OECD 2014, p. 33). Seminars, joint research between students and professors, and student-centred teaching excellence awards, are ways to collect rich qualitative feedback from students at a decentralised level.

Assessing Quality of Internship

The University of Catania (Italy) has developed a model platform that allows students to share information easily with the teaching and support staff, encourages them to reflect on their internship's learning outcomes, enables them to plan their future learning and their professional development, especially through communication with experts and training agencies.

5. Concluding remarks

From the above analysis it is obvious that quality teaching is a complex issue to tackle, as:

- Definitions and conceptions of quality teaching are highly varied and in constant flux
- Quality teaching initiatives are empirical and address the institutions' particular needs; they cannot be easily transplanted in other contexts
- Improving quality teaching is not a straightforward decision; it requires a long-term, non-linear effort subject to multiple constraints, internal to the institution and tied up to the national context (legal, etc)

In order to enhance the quality of teaching, actions to undertake need to include, at the very least:

- Developing a culture of dialogue and collaboration among the various university stakeholders towards the common goal of quality teaching (through incentives, and an improved communication); Quality teaching improvement lies in the entire community, including students.

- Developing tools and mechanisms to collect student feedback and make sure this is acted upon;
- Supporting in-service professional development and training for staff members at all levels of the institution (administrative, pedagogical, student support, etc.), in order to improve the use of the said instruments.

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