

The role of teachers in QA

Jens Vraa-Jensen

Chair of Higher Education and Research
Standing Committee,
Education International Europe (ETUCE)

ESG 2015 include reference to the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation

- More focus on internal QA and quality culture
- Guideline 1.3: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
 - respects and attends to the **diversity of students** and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths
 - considers and uses **different modes of delivery**, where appropriate
 - flexibly uses a variety of **pedagogical methods**

Standard 1.5 on Teaching Staff

Need to set up a **supportive environment** that allows teaching staff to carry out their work effectively.

Such an environment

- sets up and follows clear, transparent and fair processes for **staff recruitment and conditions of employment** that recognise the importance of teaching;
- offers opportunities for and promotes the **professional development** of teaching staff;
- encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the **link between education and research**;
- encourages innovation in **teaching methods** and the use of new technologies.

Implications of SCL

- No standardised tests or curriculum
- No “one size fits all” approach to planning and study-structure
- Respect for and protection of academic freedom – including the freedom to learn for the students
- Continuous professional development
- Time to prepare and evaluate classes

SCL, quality and efficiency of learning

- Standardised or teacher centred:
 - Memorising or rote learning only for the next exam
 - Not necessary a deeper understanding
- Student centred:
 - Students striving for understanding

(Gibbs and Coffey 2004; *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 5: 87–100.)

Supporting teachers in making SCL a reality

- EI study by Marie Clarke (2015): *Creating a Supportive Working Environment in European Higher Education* set the following recommendations in relation to teaching:
 - There is a need for **more investment in activities that support the teaching function** and provide academics with high quality pedagogical support that focuses directly on their practice.
 - Make available **specialised training** to academics so that they can deal with students who are presenting with diverse needs.
 - All higher education institutions should make specific and public **commitments to the teaching role** of academics.
 - All higher education institutions should **support research led teaching**.
 - Higher education institutions should recognise **teaching as a legitimate career progression route**.
 - Higher education institutions should prioritise the **evaluation of teaching**. Such evaluations should facilitate academics in the **improvement of their pedagogical activities**

More general recommendations

- There is a need for **greater investment in the higher education sector** in national and European contexts.
- Eliminate the proliferation of **fixed term contracts** in the sector and create a more **stable profession** that will attract young people.
- Create conditions that promote **equality among colleagues** so contract staff does not feel undervalued.
- Provide adequate supports so academics can achieve a **work life balance**.
- Higher education institutions need to develop systems so that academics can be **actively involved in decision-making processes** with reference to research priorities, budgets, promotion and tenure.
- Higher education institutions need to develop procedures that will focus on **building collegiality** among all staff.

Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel

Article 6 of the UNESCO 1997-Recommendation:

*Teaching in higher education is a **profession**: it is a form of public service that requires of higher education personnel expert knowledge and specialized skills acquired and maintained through rigorous and lifelong study and research; it also calls for a sense of personal and institutional responsibility for the education and welfare of students and of the community at large and for a commitment to high professional standards in scholarship and research.*

Conclusions on the role of the teacher

- Connect teaching and research for providing highest relevance and quality, based on the latest research
- Meet the different needs of a more diversified student body
- Use freedom to adjust curriculum and pedagogy for the benefit of higher understanding
- Prepare and evaluate all classes, and insist on time to such activities
- Participate in continuous professional development

Lessons for academic staff from ESG 2015

- Higher focus on creating an institutional quality culture than ESG 2005
- Quality is a process created in the classrooms – on campus or virtual
- Standard 1.5 regulating conditions for staff – including recruitment and an adjustment of the traditional academic career
- Find a new way to more prominence to teaching without just adding another system of reporting and documentation

*“Many of the recent reforms lead to an instrumentalisation of education, knowledge and understanding. When you are required to make all teaching fit into 10 ECTS and modules of 7 weeks, where there are targets to meet and levels of competence to be measured and assessed at the next exam, it will most often interfere with your way of thinking. I know as an educator that we are experts in teaching students how to get high grades in exams. But what have they studied and learned?”
[Lecturer, Denmark].*

(Clarke 2015, p 61)

THANK YOU FOR THE ATTENTION
JVJ@DM.DK