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.
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?”

[Clarke 2015, p 61]