

Pursuing Quality in Higher Education

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“With regard to the quality of research, we tend to evaluate faculty the way the Michelin guide evaluates restaurants. We ask, ‘How high is the quality of this cuisine relative to the genre of food? How excellent is it?’ With regard to teaching, the evaluation is done more in the style of the board of Health. The question is, ‘Is it safe to eat here?’” (Arum and Roksa, 2010, 121)

“...higher education must do something at a scale never before realized: deliver a high-quality postsecondary education—and at less cost—to more than three-quarters of an increasingly diverse and often academically underprepared undergraduate population.” (Kuh et al, *Change*, 2011)

“Irrespective of college major or institutional selectivity, what matters to career success is students’ development of a broad set of cross-cutting capacities...” (Carnevale, Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce)

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Putting Quality into Perspective

What the Literature Tells Us

Measuring Quality

Recommendations



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1. PUTTING QUALITY INTO PERSPECTIVE



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Setting the Context

- Globalisation is forcing very significant change across all knowledge-intensive industries;
- Investment in HE and R&D is recognised as vital for ensuring sufficient talent & knowledge base for sustainable economic growth/recovery;
- HEIs and nations are measured against each other according to indicators in which comparative and competitive advantages come into play;
- Governance and management is a major policy issue and matter of public concern;
- There is increasing emphasis on value-for-money and (public) investor confidence;
- Global economic crisis simply accelerating existing trends.



Major Challenges Facing Higher Education

- Sustaining funding at time of declining public budgets & increasing demand from society and by students;
- Balancing needs of post-secondary system and institutional ambition;
- Widening access/participation to new/diverse learners;
- Developing appropriate QA, transparency tools and regulation of HE and research;
- Requirement for greater responsiveness to societal/economic needs and regional accessibility;
- International comparability and benchmarking – rise of global rankings;
- Managing internationalisation and attracting talent;
- New forms of provision (for-profit, cross-border, emerging economies);
- New technologies, MOOCs and new learning environments.



Quality is a Key Driver

Quality and excellence are key drivers impacting on and affecting higher education, nationally and globally:

- Recognition of key role higher education plays within society and as economic driver;
- Rising costs prompting concerns about graduation, job placement and debt/loan repayment;
- Greater accountability for use of scarce public/national resources;
- Confidence for prospective students and employers, and society;
- Growing necessity to regulate the marketplace – greater number and diversity of HEIs;
- Increasing internationalisation of higher education;
- Society has a right to know whether its institutions are capable of meeting its expectations.



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Quality is Concern for all Stakeholders

- National geo-political *positioning and pride*;
- Beacon to attract/retain *investment, business and talent*;
- Institutional *reputation and status*;
- Performance *assessment of scientific-scholarly research*;
- Graduate *capability and opportunities*;
- Link between qualification and *career opportunities and life-style*;
- Value-for-money and return-on-(public) *investment*;
- Growing importance of *global networks*.

Political and societal support for HE can only be maintained by **assurance of quality which provides investor confidence**.



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WHAT THE LITERATURE TELLS US



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What Higher Education Does

- Wider student experience seen as evidence of effective student learning:
 - Encompasses teaching and learning, curriculum, student life, advising and mentoring;
 - Not only how HE aids human capital capacity/capability but how it enhances ability of individuals to make choices, have control over their lives and contribute to society (Streeting, 2009; McInnis, 2003);
- “What institutions do is more important than who or what they are” (Ro, Yin & Terenzini, 2013).
 - Amount of time/effort students put into studies and other educationally purposeful activities;
 - How HEI deploys its resources and organizes curriculum and other learning opportunities to get students to participate in activities linked to student learning.



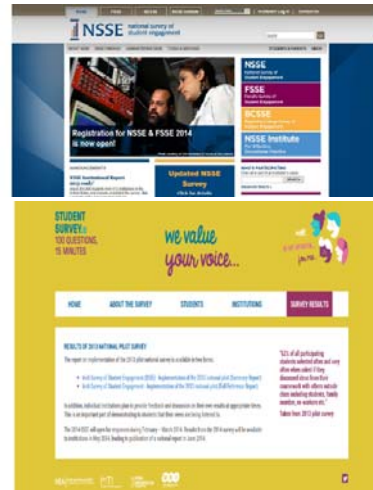
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The “Total Student Experience”

All aspects of student engagement – *inside* and *beyond the classroom*;

“The student experience isn’t just about teaching and learning....Its about the sports clubs and societies, it is about the interactions and conversations, it is about meeting people from entirely different backgrounds and circumstances to yourself, finding out something new about them and their background and, in doing so, finding out something new about yourself.” (University of Edinburgh, 2004)



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Australian Survey of Student Engagement (ASUSSE)

Student Engagement

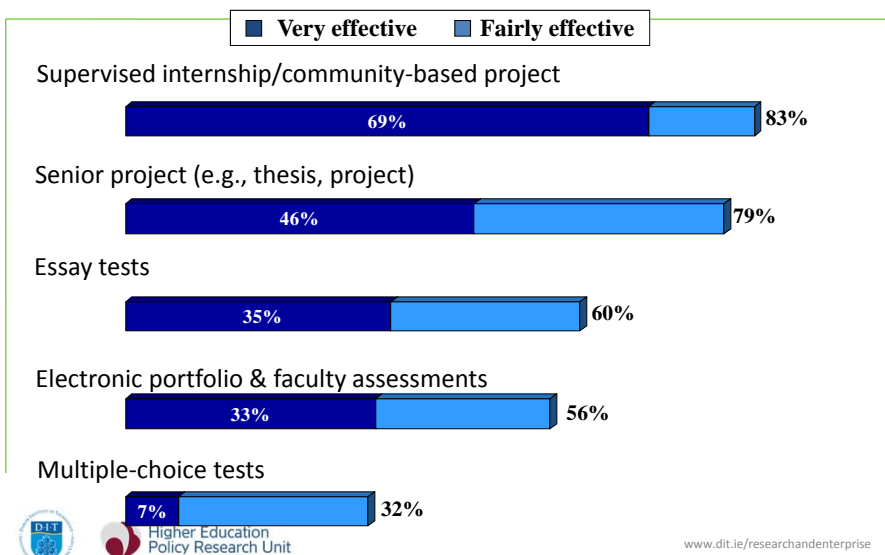
- Student Learning:
 - Time spent on task and quality of the effort (Tyler, 1949);
 - Impact of college experience (Pascarella, 1985; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005)
- Student engagement measures effective educational practices:
 - Faculty/student contact,
 - Cooperation among students,
 - Active learning/time on task,
 - Prompt feedback,
 - High expectations,
 - Quality of teaching,
 - Influential interactions with other students, and
 - Supportive campus environment (Kuh et al., 2006; Kuh, 2008)



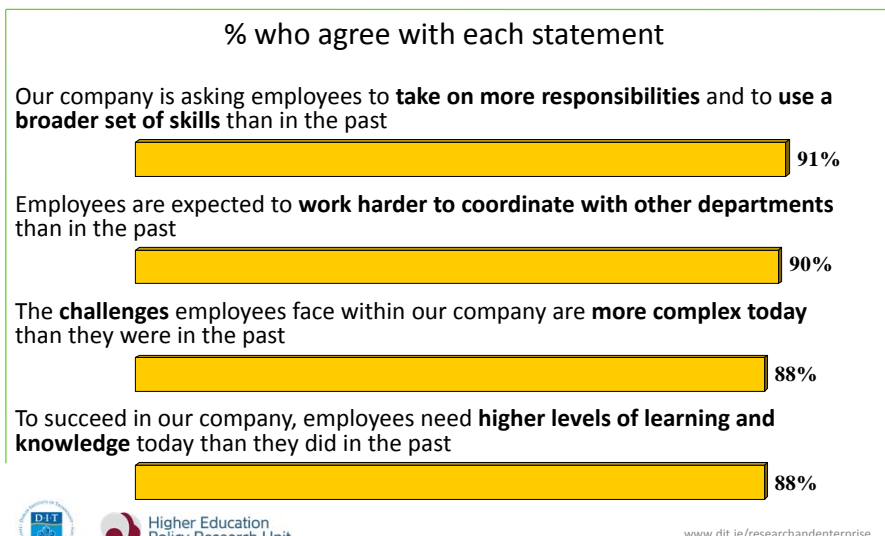
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Graduate Skills and Knowledge



Employer Expectations



Pedagogy and Innovation

Across most disciplines and countries, graduates are more likely to participate in innovation processes if studies involve/stress practical knowledge: group assignments, participation in research projects, internships, work placements, project/problem-based learning, oral presentations.

- Creativity is a key skill that differentiates innovators from non-innovators;
- Innovation not specific to STEM disciplines, and 50% of innovative professionals have a non-STEM background.

- Learning attributes most associated with student engagement are also most associated with innovation.
- The learning environment is critical.

(Avvisati, Jacotin, Vincent-Lancrin, "Education HE Students for Innovative Economies: What International Data Tells Us" 2013)



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Lessons from Bologna

- Bologna challenges rankings by *placing quality within broader educational framework*
- *Big idea* is the "accountability loop":
 - Qualification framework *facilitates flexible learning paths* and sets out clear statement of what students must demonstrate at each qualification level
 - "Tuning" *aids (re-)design, development, implementation, evaluation and enhancement* of quality degree programmes within context
 - Formalized concept of *learning outcomes rather than measuring inputs* (e.g. credit hours, classroom teaching, entry grades)
 - QA systems sets evaluation standards and guidelines for *institutional self-assessment and quality processes, and external monitoring*
 - Diploma Supplement provides *description of academic career and the competencies acquired*



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Degree Qualifications Profile



5 primary areas of competence:

- Specialized Knowledge,
- Broad/ Integrated Knowledge,
- Applied Learning,
- Intellectual Skills,
- Civic Learning

The Degree Qualifications Profile, Lumina Foundation, 2011



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Embedding Quality Culture

- Traditionally, academic staff hired on basis of subject expertise;
- Today, emphasis increasingly on ability to teach
 - Valuing teaching
- Examples of actions being taken:
 - Teaching and Learning qualification compulsory, including accredited courses in teaching and learning;
 - Staff development and continuous up-skilling via short courses, away-days, etc.;
 - Teaching Fellowships;
 - Teaching portfolio considered as part of promotion criteria;



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International “National” Examples

- National co-ordinating organisations being established to:
 - Ensure national standard as per primary/secondary teachers
 - Improve performance and efficiency/effectiveness, and overall quality
 - Respond to international competitiveness.
- *National Forum for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning*
 - Providing all students with the highest quality teaching and learning experience;
 - Integrating research with teaching and learning;
 - Enhancing the first-year experience of students through the provision of more broad-based, interdisciplinary curricula;
 - Enhancing the flexibility of programme provision; and
 - Strengthening the focus on learning outcomes to ensure that all graduates acquire the key transferable skills and core competences that are needed in the economy and society of the twenty-first century.



MEASURING QUALITY



What is Quality?

- No internationally agreed definition of education quality;
- No objective or value-free set of indicators;
- Context is important:
 - Which university is best depends upon who is asking the question, what question is being asked and the purpose;
 - Different societies have different priorities;
 - Higher education systems produce different results depending upon what is measured, and the purpose.



Quality is Complex Term

- Educational quality is a complex term but broadly refers to the “process” and “outputs”, in other words to teaching and learning:
 - Breadth and depth of the curriculum;
 - Pedagogical methods including extent of feedback to students and level of engagement and student performance, retention and employability;
 - Links to societal practice and working life through internships and work-based learning experiences;
 - Students’ ability to solve problems and educational gain: the difference between performance on a particular measure before and after the student’s experience of higher education;
 - Other measures include how well higher education institutions or the system-as-a-whole is managed, and the degree of equality of opportunity.



Measuring Quality

- Traditionally, quality was measured in **input** (e.g. student entry, academic qualifications, budget/income, library resources) and reputation;
- Today, focus on **outcomes, outputs, impact, benefit and relevance** via agreed explicit performance requirements:
 - Shift from QA for enhancement to QA for accountability;
 - Shift from programmatic to institutional assessment;
 - Shift from national to international/cross-border reviews;
 - Spectrum from light-touch to regulatory and risk-based.
- Aggregate of indicators assumed = quality, but:
 - Indicators (often) measure of wealth/socio-economic advantage, and privilege the most resource-intensive institutions.



Do we **measure what we value?** or Do we **value what we measure?**

Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted. (Einstein)

“Wise decisions are needed about **what** and **how** to measure the proficiencies demanded by the 21st century”. (Kuh, 2013)



Quality Instruments



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RECOMMENDATIONS



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EU Recommendations

- Every HEI should develop/implement a strategy for support and on-going improvement of quality of T&L, with due parity with research;
- HEIs should encourage, welcome, and take account of student feedback;
- By 2020, all staff teaching should have certified pedagogical training; CPD should become requirement;
- Recruitment, progression and promotion should take recognise/reward HE teachers for T&L;
- HEIs should establish counselling, guidance, mentoring and tracking systems to support students;
- HEIs should support teachers to develop skills for online/other forms of T&L opened up by digital era;
- EU should establish European Academy for Teaching and Learning.



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Checklist for Institutional Leaders (1)

Teaching and learning as part of the institutional profile

- What strategies or benchmarks used to enhance quality of teaching in my institution?
- How to incorporate into institution's profile and mission to best affirm importance of teaching and developing its quality?

Support to teaching staff

- What steps to ensure that individual teacher feels empowered and supported in developing teaching skills?
- Is there an in-house forum for enriching the T&L experience?
- How does institution support teaching staff to cater for diverse student needs?



Checklist for Institutional Leaders (2)

Support to students

- How much transparent information to students to help them choose the learning offer most appropriate to them?
- How and through which structures does my institution support students during the entire student life cycle?
- How does my institution monitor student success? How and what data should be collected, evaluated and used?
- How does my institution provide for and respond to real-time student feedback?



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