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## Quality Teaching In Higher Education

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### Introduction

Higher education is a very important sector for the growth and development of human resource which can take responsibility for social, economic and scientific developments of the country. In the fast changing world of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century public education is also changing. As part of the changes the role of higher education will also be different both in the educational system and in the society. Together with them the role of teachers will also change. Digital tools are increasingly being used to support teaching in higher education. These tools place new demands on the tasks and responsibilities of the teachers, and can influence teacher roles. Teachers in modern classrooms are no longer lecturers, they are facilitators, their main task is to set goals and organise the learning process accordingly. Difference between the past and present tasks of teachers is represented by the technical background they need to be able to use and handle effectively (computer, photocopier, power point, projectors, etc). Instead of teaching chalk face, they need to be an information technology expert, a technical or/ and a photocopy master. Recent trends in higher education have increased the attention given to the quality of the teaching offered to the students. Because of the expansion of the higher education sector, the importance of teaching is now being re-examined and reassessed.

Higher education is no longer reserved to the elite. The internet has globalised the market place and institutions are increasingly competing for the best students, nationally and internationally. Many professors are now teaching international students, and consequently much develop new pedagogical strategies. Teaching methods have also evolved. Professors who wish to incorporate aspects of on-line learning need to become familiar with new pedagogical methods. Distance education in print form is being supplemented by Internet-based delivery. Mixed mode of learning have become common the majority of cross-border distance programmes now involve some form of face-to-face pedagogical or administrative contact, sometimes visits to study centres. Generally people in remote locations and working adults are the first to experience these new forms of learning.



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## **Definitions of Quality Teaching**

Harvey and Green distinguish four definitions of quality that can help us to understand what Quality Teaching might be. First, quality as “excellence” – the traditional conception of quality—is the dominant one in many old elite higher education institutions. Second, quality can be defined as “value for money”- a quality institution in this view is one that satisfies the demands of public accountability. Third, quality may be seen as “fitness for purpose”- the purpose being that of the institution, for instance getting students to learn sciences efficiently. The last definition is that of quality as “transforming”. According to this definition, Quality Teaching is teaching that transforms students’ perceptions and the way they go about applying their knowledge to real world problems.

Several scholars define quality in higher education as the process of quality enhancement. Hau argues that quality in higher and Quality Teaching in particular, springs from a never-ending process of reduction and elimination of defects. Argyris & Schon determine that quality enhancement in higher education institutions should be a double-loop process. The first loop of quality enhancement is driven by the inquest: “are we doing things right?”, but this question alone is insufficient. For the quality enhancement process to function, a second loop must be added, dealing with the question “are we doing the right things?”. For instance, making sure that the quality of lectures is good is not enough. An institution must also ask itself if it should offer other classes to its students besides lectures.

One may notice that definitions of quality in higher education as a process, an outcome or a property are not necessarily in conflict, but can potentially be used by higher education institutions as complementary.

## **Role of Teachers in Quality Teaching in Higher Education**

The role and status accorded to teachers is being reassessed as external demands for quality increase. Indeed, it is easy to understand that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. Several features of the “good teacher” have been repeatedly identified by scholars. Fildman lists teacher sensitively to class level and progress, clarity of course requirements, understandable explanations, respect for students and encouragement of independent thought, as the main characteristics of a good teacher. Marsh mentions appropriate workload, clear explanations, empathy with students, openness on the part of the lecturer and quality of the assessment procedures.

## **The two pillars of good teaching: Organization and expressiveness**

According to Feldman and Murray two qualities are highly correlated with student



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achievement: organization and expressiveness.

Good organization of subject matter and planning, of the course are important to student learning. Well structured presentations, lecture-outlines, headings, subheading, and syllabi enhance students' learning experiences. Indeed, outlines, transfer knowledge structure.

Expressiveness, sometimes referred to as “enthusiasm”–but also encompassing the use of eye contact, appropriate physical movement and change in tone when important material is presented – also has great impact on student learning. It enhances students' scholastic behaviours such as attendance to following lectures, amount of homework completed and academic achievement. Expressiveness also increases motivation and studying.

Another issue of importance as regards to Quality Teaching is that there may be different types of learning and teaching. Students learning approaches are of two sorts: the “deep approach” which focuses on understanding the course material and the “surface approach” which focuses on memorising the material itself. Furthermore, students' approaches to study are influenced by the students' conception of learning.

In parallel to research on “good” teaching, some researchers focus on “extraordinary teachers”. Extraordinary teachers are those teachers who produce unique and memorable educational experiences. According to Stephenson, “extraordinary teachers know what to teach, how to teach, and how to improve”, “extraordinary teachers have passion for four things, learning, their fields, their students, and teaching”.

Skelton recalls in Times Higher Education Supplement (Nov 16<sup>th</sup> 2007) that teaching excellence is generally considered to be achieved primarily through individual effort. But this idea of individual excellence masks crucial questions relating to basic material conditions of teaching and learning. He warns against the bias induced by the teaching- excellence-centred approach which often dominates. Research studies rarely scrutinize the selection process that identifies some particular teachers as excellent.

### **Quality Teaching and research**

Teaching and research are central to the delivery of higher education. For many observers, the relationship between teaching and research is fundamental in defining the distinctive nature of the university as an institution. The scholarship of teaching as distinct from the scholarship of research, the issue of the links tying teaching to research has been the most controversial one among scholars writing



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on quality Teaching. Some scholars suggest that there is a strong, symbiotic link between teaching and research. Stephenson found that one of the characteristics of extraordinary teachers is that they have passion for their field. This passion may arise through research. Therefore research could help teachers to be better teachers.

### **Conclusion: The future of Higher Education and Quality Teaching**

One of the most foreseeable evolutions in the future of higher education lies within globalisation. This rapid process bears many consequences on higher education worldwide. “In many nations, international mobility; global comparison, benchmarking and ranking; and the internationalisation of institutions and system; are key policy themes (OECD, 2007)”. The OECD (2006) has developed four possible scenarios for the future of higher education. These scenarios were constructed by taking into account two central variables, the extent of globalisation and the amount of influence of state government (administration-market). The scenarios address for instance the division between teaching and research universities or the increase of technology that might have an indirect but comprehensive impact on teaching. The future of higher education might bring about new and heightened considerations regarding the quality teaching.

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