

Improving teaching and learning: a systemic approach to institutional change

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Abstract

This paper describes one university's approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning at the institutional level, based on the premise of improving the design of curriculum rather than focussing on the skills of teachers as such. The paper describes the process by which university-wide principles of curriculum design were defined and agreed, as well as the parallel campaigns needed to align promotions, budgets and other key drivers of academic behaviour and institutional culture behind curriculum renewal. The paper outlines the key enabling factors behind the approach; both those which might be seen as institution specific and those which can be found in most universities. It also identifies the structural and cultural obstacles to this kind of systemic reform, including some common approaches which are intended to improve teaching and learning, and the competing pressures for research improvement.