What Works Conference

Shifting Institutional Culture, Promoting Teaching Excellence and Evaluating Progress

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Trends, Demands and Developments in H.E.

- Market requirements
- Globalization
- Increased student numbers
- Funding constraints
- Greater accountability
- International harmonization and mobility
- Increased transferability and compatibility
- Safeguarding standards
- Support for diversity
- Quality improvement in learning and teaching
The European Context for Learning and Teaching

- “Staff engaged in teaching should be qualified and competent to do so.” *(Bologna, ENQA Guidelines, 2005)*

- Two-thirds of responding universities stated that they had obligatory procedures to evaluate individual teaching staff, with a further 17% having voluntary processes in place *(EUA, Trends V, 2005)*

- “the focus on quality in the Bologna process has certainly raised awareness within higher education institutions of the potential benefits and challenges of effective quality assurance and enhancement activities.” *(EUA, Trends V, 2005)*

- In South East Europe, “effective quality assurance is proving to be an extremely difficult challenge to address... with little activity in this area and with little or no change from Trends 111.” *(EUA, Trends V, 2005)*

This implies a shift to a more pro-active quality culture and emphasis on good teaching across Europe.
Local and Institutional Context
Teaching to Learning

From:
❖ “a college is an institution that exists to provide instruction.”

To:
❖ “a college is an institution that exists to produce learning. This shift changes everything. It is both needed and wanted.”

(Barr and Tagg, 1995)

Subtly but profoundly we are shifting to a new paradigm.
One Institutional Approach

Given that “there cannot be one best way of teaching” (Ramsden, 2008)

- Opportunities for **constructive dialogue** created in order to develop a greater awareness, understanding and self-analysis around the concept of ‘excellence in teaching’.
- Research and published exemplars provided (Examples: Ramsden, Kember and McNaught, Hartley et al)
- Regular, Faculty based workshops organised in which such ideas are presented and discussed
- Guidelines provided as part of the University’s Observation Scheme
- Staff briefed in considering these when planning lessons
- Appropriate reference in individual feedback discussions
- Faculties provided with subject specific analyses of what works well in a specific discipline and within the University’s context.
One Key Process – An Observation Scheme
One Key Process 1

- *An Observation Scheme* to assure quality, recognize a ‘what works’ approach and support improvement
- Piloted and then fully implemented for two academic cycles.
- All staff of whatever status observed annually
- Trained evaluators from the Rectorate and Deans’ Offices plus additional ‘educational developers’
- Schedules take into account rank, subject, three languages of instruction and include two observers to combine these elements
One Key Process 2

- Individual opportunity for a pre-evaluation meeting, an observation, and confidential feedback, both oral and written.
- Teachers are encouraged to comment on the report.
- Summary data analyzed centrally for University bodies and Faculties.
- The scheme linked to training opportunities.
- Twice yearly evaluative report (process and effect) distributed to all staff and students and for discussion in Faculty Councils, the Quality Assurance and Management Commission and by the University; plus Faculty specific reports.
Survey of What Worked – Purpose and Aims

- To see if these initiatives have resulted in achieving an institutional shift in approaches to quality culture and improvement related to learning and teaching
- To examine staff perceptions and beliefs with regard to their role as teachers
- To analyze what staff believed constituted excellence in teaching and to find out what other factors they thought influenced teaching quality
- The survey was also used for awareness-raising
The Survey

- Consisted of two sections: a request to describe what they considered to be ‘excellence’ in teaching and a Likert scale questionnaire.

- Completed by Ninety two members of staff in confidence during departmental discussion workshops, constituting 40% of all teaching staff from the five Faculties and the Language Centre.

- Mixed responses in terms of gender, age and ethnicity, but with a majority of responses from assistants (approximately 70% assistant, 20% professor, 10% no response), reflecting meeting attendance.

- In addition to this survey, we also analyzed the internal evaluation reports about the Observation process.
Interpretation of Results – Teaching Role

- Innovative teaching seen as a main role (94%)
- Majority felt the role might be valued more.
- Substantial majority (71%) felt that academic qualifications conferred ability to teach well
- 83% felt that years of experience made you a better teacher
- 33% felt that students were responsible for their own success; 84% acknowledged that their own teaching had a great influence on learning
- 77% said peer discussions were useful.
- Very mixed feelings about whether institutional leaders and performance management processes had a positive effect

Staff value role as teachers. They find colleagues more useful than management. The view that qualifications/experience equal competence remains strong. Solid basis for change but making training and improvement more challenging.
- Dialogue about ‘Excellence in Teaching’

- Most staff said they tried to follow good practice and evaluate their teaching against learning objectives
- 66% said the University’s review process had enabled shared discussion
- They welcomed the opportunity to articulate and share ideas about what they defined as excellence in teaching in higher education

Definitions of “excellence”

- Corresponded to a large extent to the characteristics identified in research
- No significant inter-disciplinary differences in the written statements, although the survey results indicate more varied views
- Mixed response about whether the country/region has a significantly different approach to teaching from other European countries
- Strong emphasis on professional conduct and an even more pronounced belief (57%) in deep subject expertise and excellent qualifications.

Staff actively trying to use strategies they consider to be excellent, to evaluate their practice and wider teaching issues. Discussion with peers aids reflection. Staff still very focused on professional standards and knowledge. The University to note this whilst operating procedures and developing initiatives.
# Shift in Perception and Improving Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77%</td>
<td>Helped with reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Scheme relevant for experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>61%</td>
<td>Impacted on teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76%</td>
<td>Generally supportive</td>
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<tr>
<td>73%</td>
<td>Tried something new or different</td>
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<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td>Improved confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68%</td>
<td>More aware of teaching methodologies and strategies</td>
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Procedure accepted and has had some positive effect in supporting improvement and shifting perceptions.
Final Conclusions and Questions

- SEEU has staff with different views of what constitutes good teaching and what affects their role and practice. This is culturally sensitive as well as being linked to wider standards and definitions.

  How does an institution take account of staff perceptions and diversity and utilize it to improve the quality of learning?

- One quality initiative such as an Observation Scheme can have a significant impact on the attitudes, awareness and practice of teachers.

  How does an institution develop, sustain and maximize the impact of a procedure and ensure that it continues to support innovative teaching without becoming routine or bureaucratic?

- The survey suggests that a focus on individual teachers and differentiated opportunities for reflection, discussion and training as well as on university wide approaches; on dialogue and on regular opportunities for awareness raising contributes to a positive shift in attitudes and practice. This links to the concept of promoting a total quality culture.

  How can an institution devise and push forward strategies which