Promoting learning and teaching

A story of partnership, time, stability, quality and not quantity, support, value of teaching, innovation, etc...

Partnership mindset among stakeholders; common understanding needed	Taking time, not rushing
Value not only research but also teaching	Looking at qualitative outcomes; not the numbers!
Support the enhancement of the system	Innovating both at policy and practice levels

International Peer Learning Activity

Perspectives on national strategies to promote learning and teaching

Wednesday, 3 November – Thursday, 4 November 2021 (lunch to lunch), online

Key takeaways from Gohar Hovhannisyan, European University Association (EUA)

(1) Partnership mindset needed when setting up a scene for national strategies on L&T
- There is a need to carry out studies/research to understand the context and the potential of the sector before putting together a national strategy/policy for L&T.
- A Consultative approach throughout the whole process is crucial (case of Ireland). The outcome can never be something that meets all the needs/perspectives of different stakeholders but ensuring they are well consulted throughout the process guarantees they will be involved in the implementation of the strategy/policy for L&T.
- Creating common understanding around concepts/goals such as for example the student engagement is key to enable the whole sector shares a similar understanding of what needs to be achieved.
- Bringing stakeholders together around conferences and other platforms is crucial for dialogues and sharing practices (HE conference, case of Austria).

(2) All this takes time – no rushing
- It is important to recognise that *rushing processes does not help* the general goal of developing a comprehensive mutual understanding and consequently a strategy/policy for L&T.
- As to threats posed to the strategy/policy development/implementation posed by fluctuating national level decision-makers and/or staff turnover, it is important to ensure that there are *mechanisms for countering such changes and bringing more stability*. The Norwegian example of the White Papers is very relevant for this issue.

(3) University teaching is undervalued
- Many highlighted the need or actions currently undertaken to *increase the parity of esteem* between research and teaching. The missions of research and teaching need to be closer to each other.
- *Awards and grants* for research on teaching, for collaborative teaching projects, etc are a great way of valuing teaching.
- Teaching assessment needs to aim at *supporting the development of teachers* rather than use the outcomes for ''punishment''.
- The culture of teaching needs to change – teaching should be seen as less individual and more collective endeavour.
- The teaching profession at the university needs to be made attractive to avoid aging of the profession.

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(4) Data driven decision-making

- It is difficult to collect data on teaching, but the data is important while making decisions. Understanding what data is needed is crucial (case of Armenia).
- At the same time, numbers always need interpretation and numbers alone do not give the right picture. Combination of quantitative and qualitative data is crucial (case of Portugal).

(5) Innovate for learning and teaching

- Thinking of innovative approaches and topics while developing L&T policy/strategy is key for success. However, no matter how innovative the topics are, they should be something that the *sector (universities) is concerned about* otherwise it will become irrelevant to them.
- While innovating at the national level, it is important to first look into what is happening at the universities, put the *different bits together* and create frameworks that will be *useful and applicable for the current needs* of the universities.
- Innovation is also needed in monitoring mechanisms such as the quality assurance of higher education. Instead of being a tick box exercise, external QA should serve as means for *identifying the exact needs for quality enhancement* and *supporting universities in finding out the ways* to improve.
- Innovation in L&T policy-making is also about exploring new topics relevant for the sector such as *leadership in teaching* currently explored under the frames of EUA-led LOTUS project