

International Peer Learning Activity

Perspectives on national strategies to promote learning and teaching

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

Summary of the PLA by Günter Wageneder

The PLA on national strategies to promote learning and teaching brought up different perspectives on national strategies and strategic measures by gathering representatives of national authorities and stakeholders from six countries of the EHEA. During the two-days-event (lunch-to-lunch) the participants reflected on their respective approaches to the issue. The following word cloud offers a dense overview of the main keywords from the presentations used during the sessions.

academic accreditation assessment assurance change collaboration continuous culture development digital dissemination education enhancement established eu evaluation excellence experience external framework funding governed heis higher implementation improve initiatives innovation institutions international involved learning legal national nceqe paper partners pedagogical policy portuguese practice private professional programmes project Promoting providing public qa qualifications quality ra recognition research review scientific skills staff stakeholders strategy strengthening Students study support system teachers teaching training universities working

Word cloud based on the presentations used during the PLA (created with <u>https://tagcrowd.com/</u>).

Basically, learning and teaching often is kind of a black box, a process happening between teachers and their students, difficult to control. Nevertheless, many efforts have been made by various authorities to promote the quality of this process. For around 20 years now this promotion is very much driven by the Bologna process, at first mainly indirect via the ECTS and the ESG, only in recent years more direct by various discussions and approaches to the enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching (above all in the Paris Communique 2018 and the Rome Communique 2020; or permanent work groups on the topics within the European BFUG). Learning and teaching and its quality are also addressed through other European initiatives, e.g. by funding of various (Erasmus) projects (for example the present PROFFORMANCE project, coordinated by the Hungarian Ministry for Innovation and Technology, was mentioned) or by various white papers, for example by the recent EFFECT project by EUA.



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The following summary of the presentations and discussions during the PLA is organized around three main viewpoints: 1) the topics to be addressed, 2) the approaches to address them and – as far as possible – 3) the obtained effects or how to monitor them. Please note: References to single countries are only made in the case of very specific, outstanding approaches; common approaches or issues etc. are not referenced to countries.

Topics:

- quality of learning and teaching, student centred learning;
- evidence of what works (and what doesn't)/ evidence-based teaching and teacher development;
- professional development of teaching staff;
- curriculum development;
- incorporation of transdisciplinary topics (SDGs, ethics, digitalisation, ... as part of all curricula);
- generic skills, 21st century skills;
- definition of ambitious learning outcomes (Norway);
- research based teaching;
- relation to student mobility.

Approaches:

- define and continuously reform framework conditions and/or the national legal basis;
- definition of national strategies (e.g. Georgia with 3 pillars: modernisation, LLL, quality and equality; also Armenia and Portugal) or national development plans for higher education as a basis for subsequent governance (e.g. Austria);
- preparation of strategies and the like by national advisory groups with stakeholder involvement, esp. with students (e.g. Austria's "conference" of stakeholders in higher education (Hochschulkonferenz));
- responsibility of institutions to implement reforms, e.g. controlled by performance agreements between institution and resp. ministry that must incorporate national strategies or development plans (e.g. Austria);
- fostering of institutional strategies;
- specific agencies for the enhancement of learning and teaching (e.g. Ireland, Georgia, Norway: 12 national Centres for Excellence in Education);
- also quality assurance agencies in charge (e.g. Norway); incl. various forms of (external) quality assurance (e.g. incl. accreditation, i.e. in this context: setting of standards);
- HEI-based centres/departments (financed by the respective ministry);
- agenda setting, keeping institutions and individuals informed;
- also project funding plays an important role (Norway: competitive funding; also Portugal);
- relevance of EU funded programmes (e.g. Erasmus capacity building);
- inform and discuss via whitepapers (Norway: discussed and agreed upon in parliament), online repositories of good practice, conferences, governmental consultations, ...



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- networking between various groups/stakeholders and various institutions;
- teaching awards;
- initiation and/or support of professional development activities;
- peer reviews of education;
- specific support of technology-enhanced learning (even before the lockdowns);
- research of effective teaching and resp. publications.

(Discussion on) Effects (and how do measure them) – i.e. monitoring:

- difficult to measure success;
- but various approaches to try to do so;
- focus on quality or quantity? focus on gained competencies?
- numbers preferred but various aspects difficult to put in numbers;
- national quantitative approaches: national student barometer (Norway), student social survey (Austria), national teacher survey (Norway);
- ensure student, alumni and other surveys on institutional level (e.g. via performance agreements); but student evaluation is also seen as a "black box"; alternative/addendum: focus groups;
- reports by universities (e.g. on accomplishment of performance agreements; annual knowledge balance reports);
- but in any case, strategies or measures need time to take effect;
- special approach: "Agreed National Understanding of Student Success" (Ireland).

Further discussion

- student involvement in stakeholder consultation;
- "The enhancement of L&T is a story of partnership, time, stability, quality and not quantity, support, value of teaching, innovation, etc." (from one of the summaries during the PLA);
- Non-participation in development/innovation/... should not be sanctioned; rather rely on support;
- Aging faculty seems to be a problem in some cases;
- In some countries also geographic decentralisation is a challenge;
- The gap between the relevance of teaching and the relevance of research for a scientist's career remains a big barrier to teaching innovation;
- Funding often isn't sustainable.

Countries represented in the presentations during the PLA

Armenia, Austria, Georgia, Ireland, Norway, Portugal

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