

## Policy Brief: Fostering Quality Teaching in Higher Education: Policies & Practices

### Policy Summary

The OECD's Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE) began the "Supporting Quality Teaching in Higher Education" project in 2007 in order to examine how higher education institutions were establishing policies to foster quality teaching practices. The project then sought to share effective initiatives in order to assist fellow institutions with their quality-teaching policies. In phase 2 of the project, the IMHE recommended the following policy levers in order to increase quality-teaching practices in higher education institutions:

- Policy lever 1. Raising awareness of quality teaching
- Policy lever 2. Developing excellent teachers
- Policy lever 3. Engaging students
- Policy lever 4. Building organization for change and teaching leadership
- Policy lever 5. Aligning institutional policies to foster quality teaching
- Policy lever 6. Highlighting innovation as a driver for change
- Policy lever 7. Assessing impacts

### Factors and Influences

IMHE recognizes that changes in employment over the last 50 years have slowly created the necessity for different learning outcomes for today's students. Employers believe that potential employees must exhibit certain attributes necessary to work in today's market acquired from project-based work and distance learning projects. With this new skill set required, new pedagogical approaches are needed in order to facilitate this type of learning for a wider diversification of student profiles, which ultimately are the "clients" for these new approaches. The improvement of quality teaching matters most to students and their future needs, which must be addressed in order to allow for economic, cultural and social growths within our society.

### Critical Analysis

While the project set out to study a variety of institutions, it relied on individual submissions in order to conduct its analysis. The lack of independent evidence gathering from IMHE creates a lack of legitimacy on the reported submissions. Only 3 of the original 29 institutions in Phase One and 2 of the 13 in Phase Two were from non-OECD member countries. The project states that transferring initiatives to other countries is not wholly recommended without proper consideration; however, further advice on how to implement these initiatives is missing especially considering the differences between OECD developed members and non-OECD developing members. IMHE has set out to recommend a list of policies that a majority of institutions could not implement under the current economic situation, yet there was no mention throughout the project on how to address this important issue. In general, the project as a whole and the analysis that follow simply represent an ideal set of circumstances that IMHE would suggest each institution to adhere to in order to improve the quality of teaching in higher education. However, since the OECD is at the mercy of its member countries, it has no real authority in the implementation of these policies. Therefore the project could undoubtedly fall on deaf ears to a variety of education players who are more concerned with "Lifelong Learning for All" as mandated by OECD, the Organization for **Economic** Co-operation and Development.

## SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

- Policy levers are understandable and accessible
- The project timeline was sufficient (2007-2012)
- A variety of case studies were presented
- Institutions representing each of the continents were showcased
- Includes some non-OCED member countries

### Weaknesses

- Project fails to address financial component of quality-teaching
- Priorities are not addressed
- The project analysis “preaches to the choir”
- Does not address needs of different types of institutions (private, public, etc)
- Lack of statistics/data

### Opportunities

- Institutions can begin process of analyzing current policies
- Institutions can implement highlighted case studies
- Project could help create “buy-in” within institutions
- Create dialogue between partner institutions on “best practices”

### Threats

- Countries might blindly adapt policies without addressing specific local considerations
- Institutions with no money might be quick to dismiss the recommendations
- Cultural environments could be offended by certain recommendations including students participation
- Institutional research activities could decline due to focus on teaching