Chapter 2
Quality Teaching Quality Learning

Michael Prosser
University of Sydney, Australia & University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this chapter is to outline the results of over 20 years' research into university teaching from a student-learning perspective, how teaching from this perspective relates to student learning (its processes and outcomes), and the implications of this research for supporting quality assurance of, quality enhancement of, and the recognition and reward of teaching and learning in higher education. These results have important implications for how we develop and implement quality assurance and enhancement processes in teaching and learning and how we recognise and reward quality teaching in higher education. If the outcomes of good teaching are quality student learning, then quality assurance, quality enhancement, and the recognition and reward for good teaching needs to focus on the students and their learning. This is a student-focused view of quality teaching. Some of these implications are described by examining some recent developments in quality assurance, enhancement, and recognition and reward at the University of Hong Kong.

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INTRODUCTION

We often talk about quality teaching in higher education. We talk about quality assurance of teaching. We talk about how to evaluate quality teaching. We talk about how to support and develop quality teaching. We talk about how we can recognize and reward quality teaching. But we rarely talk about what we mean by quality teaching. Is teaching an end in itself, and can we define, talk about, judge and support quality teaching by talking just about teaching?

In this chapter, I wish to argue that quality teaching in higher education is teaching which affords high quality student learning. But what is high quality student learning in higher education and how can that be afforded? From the perspective with which I wish to argue, teaching is not an end in itself, rather, teaching should be seen as an aspect of the process of ensuring high quality student learning. So, in the first section of this chapter I will outline a model of teaching and learning developed by my colleague, Keith Trigwell, and myself over the last 20 years. The model is in two related parts—one summarising the research into student learning and the other research into teaching. In the second section, I will draw upon part of the model and outline some of the research into the variation in the ways teachers approach their teaching in higher education, and in the third section, I will show how this variation is related to the ways in which students approach their learning. Finally, in the fourth section I would look briefly at the implications of all this for the recognition and reward of quality teaching.

A MODEL OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Figure 1 shows a model of teaching and learning which summarizes much of the research into teaching and learning from a student learning perspective. The model is in two parts. The top part summarizes research into student learning. The bottom part summarizes research into teaching. The model suggests that high quality student learning outcomes are associated with the way in which students approach their studies. Their approach is, in turn, associated with how they see, perceive, and understand the teaching and learning context. Their perceptions are conditioned by their previous experiences of teaching and learning on the one hand and on the design of the context on the other. It also suggests, and most importantly for this chapter, that student approaches to learning are associated with their teacher's approaches to teaching. Similar to student learning, teachers' approaches to teaching are associated with their perceptions of the teaching and learning context which, in turn, are conditioned by the context itself and their own previous experiences of teaching and learning.