

Less teaching yields better learning

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What is the state of teaching in higher education? Can we provide evidence of the efficacy of our teaching practices? Are we really satisfied with the results we achieve? Do we actually contribute to develop creativity, initiative, autonomy, risk assessment and taking, collaboration, and do we actually prepare our student to solve complex, often multidisciplinary problems in innovative ways? Can we do better with our limited resources? Is our investment in teaching sufficiently acknowledged and valued? Are the QS rankings more or less relevant than the Shanghai ones, those of the Times, or those of Leiden?

We frequently hear such questions uttered by disillusioned and demotivated academics. We are, all of us, well aware of the expectations and needs of society, but we often feel that we cannot respond satisfactorily. It is tempting to blame our students (“who aren’t any more like they used to be”), the shortcomings of secondary education, the pressures of competitive research, or even simply “the system”, i.e. the others. Shouldn’t we ask ourselves what we, as academics, could (or should) do to remedy the sorry state of affairs we so often deplore?

Solutions do exist! But we need to question our habits, our opinions, our intuitions, our traditions, our certainties. Also, if we are to change our teaching practices, we must do so based not on fads or on personal biases, but on validated results of well-run scientific experiments.

The talk will provide the author’s answers to the following questions:

- What is efficacy in higher education?
- Is higher education efficacious?
- Why should we try to achieve better efficacy in higher education?
- How can we achieve better efficacy in higher education?
- Which conditions should be met in order to achieve better efficacy in higher education?

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