EMBEDDING QUALITY CULTURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A SELECTION OF PAPERS FROM THE 1ST EUROPEAN FORUM FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

ENQA
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION
FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EURASHE

ESIB

EUA
European University Association

Socrates

Education and Culture

EMBEDDING QUALITY CULTURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A SELECTION OF PAPERS FROM THE 1ˢᵀ EUROPEAN FORUM FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

23 – 25 NOVEMBER 2006, HOSTED BY THE TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT MÜNCHEN, GERMANY

Edited by:

Lucien Bollaert, Sanja Brus, Bruno Curvale, Lee Harvey, Emmi Helle,
Henrik Toft Jensen, Janja Komljenovič, Andreas Orphanides and Andrée Sursock

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The idea of a European Forum for Quality Assurance was proposed in 2003 by EUA to the E4 Group, which includes ENQA, ESIB, EUA, and EURASHE. This group has been meeting regularly since 12 September 2001 to discuss ways of developing a European dimension for quality assurance.

As part of this partnership, the E4 proposed to the ministers of the Bologna signatory countries, assembled in Bergen (2005), a text entitled 'Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area', which proposed the idea of an annual Forum in order to discuss quality assurance issues, with as broad a range of actors as possible, in a European, rather than national, contexts. The ministers supported this initiative and the E4 decided to focus the first Forum upon internal quality.

This choice of topic was guided by the desire to create ownership and knowledge of quality assurance as a tool for institutional development in higher education. Quality assurance is the responsibility of each higher education institution and the foundation for the development of quality culture and creativity in higher education.

This publication gathers together a representative sample of the contributions to the Forum. All the keynote presentations are included as well as a few of the many excellent papers that contributed to lively discussions in the parallel sessions. The keynotes discuss quality from a conceptual, historical and policy perspective. The papers are mostly focused on institutional case studies and show the various ways that higher education institutions, students and QA agencies ensure quality. These and all the other papers presented at the Forum can be downloaded from the EUA website.

The Forum Organising Committee hopes that this collection of papers will inspire higher education institutions, academic staff, students and QA agencies to reflect upon ways that quality can be ensured while respecting the need for diversity and innovative practices in research and education.

On behalf of the Forum Organising Committee, I wish to thank the following for their support of this activity: the Technical University of Munich which hosted it with a great sense of organisation and hospitality, the 120 authors who submitted papers to the Forum, the Forum organising committee members who worked long hours to ensure all aspects of the Forum, the Socrates Programme which funded it partially, and Harald Scheuthle, from EUA, who spearheaded the organisation on behalf of the E4.

The European Forum for Quality Assurance will be offered again in November 2007 and will focus upon the implementation of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. We hope to repeat the success of this first Forum and look forward to welcoming you at our next event.

Henrik Toft Jensen
Chair, Forum Organising Committee

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE FORUM

Klaus Dieter Wolff[1]

I welcome all participants to this 1st European Forum for Quality Assurance in Munich, which had had its starting point in Berlin three years ago where quality assurance had been placed at the centre of the Bologna process. The Berlin Communiqué emphasised the primary role and responsibility of higher education institutions in ensuring quality, thus recognising the work started by the European University Association in the quality culture project.

The Berlin Communiqué also invited ENQA, ESIB, EUA and EURASHE to develop European standards and guidelines for quality assurance in higher education. The resulting text, which had been developed by the four organisations, proposed the organisation of an annual European forum on quality. The European Quality Assurance Forum proposal grew from the observation that the dialogue among quality assurance agencies, higher education institutions and students was happening at national level but not at European level. When quality assurance agencies met at European level, these meetings tended to be benchmarking opportunities to discuss and compare methods and philosophy of quality assurance practices. Similarly, when higher education institutions met at European level, they tended to discuss how to adapt to their changing environment. It seemed important, therefore, to create an opportunity for all actors from across Europe to meet to discuss quality issues in the context of the changing higher education landscape.

The high number of registrations (over 350) and papers (almost 80) submitted for this Forum showed just how necessary this Forum was.

This first forum is focused on internal quality procedures which will be examined through case-studies and based on a few conceptual keynote presentations.

This first QA Forum is dedicated both to Stefanie Hofmann and Roland Vermeesch who had passed away in 2006. Both had shown great dedication to the construction of Europe and to the quality of the higher education sector. Stefanie would be missed for a great number of reasons, by all colleagues, members and clients of ACQUIN, by the members and her partners in the EUA secretariat, and by the Board of ENQA, where she held the function of Vice-President. Seldom does one person possess both deep expertise in the present-day state of the art and the intelligence to imagine things to come and to break new ground in order to pave the way ahead; both excellence of analysis and the ability to condense it into clear-cut writing; both brilliance in her field and personal humbleness; both steadfastness and open-mindedness; both utter reliability and strong work ethos while maintaining a relaxed attitude, at least to the outsider, towards the high toll all this was taking on her health. In President Roland Vermeesch, we remember a genial man, who fully acquitted himself of the strenuous task of managing a Flemish college, while relentlessly defending the interests of professional higher education in his capacity as the President of EURASHE and as a member of the Bologna Follow-up Group. For that reason he had just been re-elected President and was fully committed to continuing his mission.

I would like to conclude by thanking the Technical University of Munich, its President, Professor Dr Wolfgang Herrmann, and Vice-President, Dr Hannemor Keidel, for the particularly gracious welcome extended and for offering their university as a pleasant and welcoming home for this 1st European Forum for Quality Assurance. Their staff had been extremely efficient and effective in organising all aspects of the event and I know I am speaking for everyone present when I express my gratefulness to them.

---

1   Klaus Dieter Wolff, Former President of the University of Bayreuth, Germany and Former Chairman of ACQUIN.

2. SETTING THE STAGE

Higher education and quality assessment
The many rationales for quality

Alberto Amaral[1]

Introduction

In the academic world quality assessment has traditionally assumed two apparently contradictory objectives: quality improvement and accountability. Universities mostly emphasise quality improvement, which has been a concern for higher education institutions since the Middle Ages (van Vught 1994), while the government pays special attention to accountability, aiming at guaranteeing the quality of the services provided to society by higher education institutions.

Over the last decades the context in which higher education operates has changed considerably due to a number of factors such as the emergence of markets as tools of public policy, the rise of New Public Management policy, globalisation and the growing interference of the European Union in higher education. In this paper we explore how far these developments have originated new and different rationales for quality. In what follows, we will critically examine different uses of quality assessment (and accreditation) as tools for a diversified range of actions and the way they are related to recent developments in public policies.

The emergence of markets in higher education

In the last decades the market has emerged as an instrument of public policy. Margaret Thatcher in the UK made extensive use of market mechanisms as a tool for promoting competition between public services (including higher education) to increase their efficiency and to maximise the provision of social benefits. It was Thatcher's government that defined the three **E**s for the management of the public sector (Sizer 1990): **Economy** in the acquisition of resources, **E**fficiency in the use of resources, and **E**ffectiveness in the achievement of objectives.

In several countries governments have also been experimenting with market-type mechanisms to force higher education institutions to compete for students, for funds, for research money. At the European level, the Bologna Declaration, 'redefining the nature and content of academic programmes, is transforming what were once state monopolies over academic degrees into competitive international markets' (Dill *et al* 2004: 330).

However, the efficient operation of a market requires it to be perfectly competitive (Leslie and Johnson 1974). This implies a number of conditions that are difficult to fulfil, one of them being the need for perfect information by producers and consumers about price, quality and other relevant characteristics of the good or service being purchased. Therefore, the public disclosure of the results of quality assessment exercises can be seen as a tool to provide useful information for the efficient operation of the higher education market. Information is particularly relevant in the case of higher education that has three simultaneous characteristics (Dill and Soo 2004):
1. It is an 'experience' good, meaning that its relevant characteristics can only be effectively assessed by consumption. It is only after a student starts attending classes that he forms a true idea of what he has got in terms of quality, professors, and educational experience.
2. It is a rare purchase, as a student in principle enrols in a single degree programme throughout his professional life. Therefore he cannot derive market experience from frequent purchases, as it would be the case of buying clothes or food.
3. Opting-out costs are high, as changing to a different programme or institution is difficult and in general has high associated costs (Dill and Soo 2004).

---

1 Alberto Amaral, Director of CIPES, Portugal and Former Rector of the University of Porto.

The simultaneity of these three characteristics of higher education gives the government a strong basis for intervention to protect consumers. In general, government intervention (Smith 2000) aims at providing information to students and their families and may take different forms such as licensing, accreditation, and the publicity of the results of quality assessment activities.

Immature consumers and quasi-markets

The operation of a higher education market demands that students and their families make rational economic choices. However, Dill (1997) sustains that the information for making rational choices, i.e., the measure of prospective future earnings provided by alternative academic programmes is not available. And Dill (*ibid*) adds that as students are immature consumers, many of them (or their families) would not use that kind of data even if it were available, which raises the question of the validity of the hypothesis of rational economic choice (Tavares *et al* 2006).

The theory of behavioural economics assumes that people do not regularly make rational and selfish choices. Vossensteyn and Jong (2004) have used this theory to explain student choice, which is surrounded by considerable uncertainty as they do not know the real contents of the studies and do not know if they will get a proper job after graduation. Therefore 'concepts like reference levels, loss (and risk) aversion, diminishing sensitivity, mental accounting, intemporal choice, endowment effects and rules of thumb, all seem to be relevant (…) to student choice' (*ibid*: 16).

The fact that students are immature consumers provides the ground for 'the implementation of quasi-markets, rather than consumer-oriented markets, for the distribution of academic programs' (Dill 1997: 181). The state or a state agency, acting on behalf of the final consumers, has more complete information than students about the market and can get a better bargain from the providers as it is a bulk purchaser, a rationale that is reinforced by the immature character of students as consumers. Therefore, the state will no longer be a provider of higher education, assuming instead the role of principal, representing the interests of consumers by making contracts with competing institutions, which creates a quasi-market in which independent providers compete with each other in an internal market (Le Grand and Bartlett 1993).

Markets and institutional autonomy

Jongbloed (2003) has defined a set of eight freedom conditions for providers and consumers, which are necessary for the market to be efficient. Providers should have the freedom to specify their products, the freedom to determine their price, and the freedom to use available resources. New providers should be able to enter the market without undue artificial barriers. Consumers should be free to choose the provider and the product, they should have adequate information about prices and quality, and prices paid should adequately cover the costs. Although in practice – with the usual exception of the US – the state still regulates heavily some of these institutional freedoms, a good example being the limits set to the value of fees, the implementation of quasi-markets has been associated with an increase of institutional autonomy.

The problem is that increased institutional autonomy, combined with market competition, may create difficulties for market regulation, as autonomous institutions competing in a market may follow strategies aimed at ensuring their own development and survival, even if to the detriment of the public good or the government's objectives.

Massy (2004b: 28) argued that '…the way institutions currently respond to markets and seek internal efficiencies, left unchecked, is unlikely to serve the public good', a danger that is exacerbated when competition is excessive, or when the state cuts public subsidies. By using the microeconomic theory of non-profit enterprises, Massy (2004a) demonstrated that, under those conditions, institutions tend to behave like for-profit ones, ignoring the promotion of public good inherent to their missions. This forces

the state to intervene by changing the rules of the market to ensure the fulfilment of its political objectives, quality assessment being one of the tools that might be used to ensure the compliance of institutions with public policies.

The principal-agent dilemma

The problems referred under section 4 are also related to the classical principal-agent dilemma faced by government agencies acting as monopsonistic buyers: how does the principal (government agency) ensure that the agent (university) acts as the government expects, taking into account the difficulties of monitoring the agent's activities? (Sappington 1991; Dill and Soo 2004).

The principal-agent dilemma leads to a contradiction of neo-liberal policies. On the one hand, neo-liberal policies aim at promoting the competition of institutions under market rules, reducing as much as possible government regulation in favour of market regulation. On the other hand, realising that autonomous institutions competing in a market may behave in ways that do not maximise the provision of social benefits and the public good, the government will be tempted to intervene to steer institutional behaviour towards its objectives.

Therefore, the government arbitrarily intervenes to change the rules of the game. It forces institutions to adapt their behaviour to government objectives by using an increasing number of mechanisms such as extensive arrays of performance indicators and measures of academic quality, whether quality assurance or accreditation. This is an example of the use of quality assessment as a compliance tool.

Ben Jongbloed (2004: 89-90) has used a traffic metaphor to clarify the differences between the traditional model of centralised command and control (similar to traffic signals) to coordinate higher education systems and the adoption of market-based policies (similar to a roundabout). In Ben Jongbloed's metaphor, traffic lights heavily condition drivers' decisions in the same way that government regulation conditions the behaviour of institutions, being inflexible and somewhat inefficient. A roundabout delegates more decision-making authority to the drivers (Dill *et al* 2004: 329) and makes traffic more fluid. However, Dominique Orr (2004) suggests that the new relationship between the HEIs and the government is better portrayed by the 'roundabout model' (Ben Jongbloed 2003) but with an increasing number of [government] traffic lights restricting the allowed routes. We would suggest that the Swindon magic roundabout – a famous roundabout containing five smaller roundabouts to better regulate the traffic[2] – better portrays the new relationship between higher education institutions and the government.

New Public Management and the loss of trust

The use of markets as instruments of public policy is strongly correlated with the emergence of New Public Management (NPM) that 'has championed a vision of public managers as the entrepreneurs of a new, leaner, and increasingly privatised government, emulating not only the practices but also the values of business' (Denhardt and Denhardt 2000: 1). Under NPM, students are referred to as customers or clients, and quality assurance and accountability measures have been put in place to ensure that academic provision meets the clients' needs and expectations.

One of the consequences of the NPM policies appears to have been a strong attack on the professions, including the academic profession (Reed 2002). The academy no longer enjoys the prestige on which higher education can build a successful claim to political autonomy (Scott 1989). The gradual proletarisation of the academic professions – an erosion of their relative class and status advantages (Halsey 1992) – has

---

2 See for instance: http://www.armin-grewe.com/holiday/wiltshire/swindon-roundabout.htm
    http://www.roundabout.net/DIBcounterflow.html
    http://www.armin-grewe.com/holiday/wiltshire/swindon-roundabout-press.htm

gone hand in hand with the emergence of academic capitalism (Slaughter and Leslie 1997) that makes academics less like university professionals and more like all other workers whose discoveries are considered work-for-hire, the property of the corporation, not of the professional.

NPM has also promoted the new values and demands of 'economy, efficiency, utility, public accountability, enterprise and various definitions of quality', which has forced institutions to use micromanagement control technologies, including systems for evaluation and performance measurement of research, teaching and some administrative activities, particularly those linked to finance. The implementation of these systems occurs in basic units, which are internally made accountable for budget expenditure (eventually decentralised) and for the results of evaluations of teaching and research activities. This has strongly contributed to the proletarisation of academics and diminishing their professional autonomy (Meek 2002).

The emergence of the NPM and the attacks on the efficiency of public services, including higher education, has resulted in loss of trust in institutions and their professionals[3]. For Martin Trow (1996) accountability is an alternative to trust, and efforts to strengthen it usually involve parallel efforts to weaken trust, and he adds that accountability and cynicism about human behaviour go hand in hand. So we can see that quality assessment and accreditation can also be used as a replacement for trust in institutions.

Globalisation and transnational education

In 1944 the Bretton Woods conference laid the foundations of the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Washington consensus and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have contributed to the progressive removal of national trade barriers thus creating a global economy. The idea that the freedom of movement of goods and capital was the highway leading to universal prosperity and peace has been used as an argument by many neo-liberal ideologues. Economic globalisation has also increased the role played by market mechanisms in the provision, steering and organisation of higher education. More recently there have been attempts at including higher education in the GATS agreements, which would completely remove barriers to borderless higher education or transnational higher education. Although these attempts have so far failed, franchised curricula and overseas campuses continue to develop very fast in borderless higher education (Ryan 2002; Santos 2001; Kokosalakis 1998).

These developments raise a problem of consumer protection associated with a lack of adequate information (and therefore transparency) available to the potential students, employers and competent national recognition authorities. This problem has become more acute as there is evidence of the existence of a number of 'rogue' transnational providers, degree mills and bogus institutions. Some national governments have already taken measures to curb the activity of some institutions that were perceived as 'rogue' transnational providers.

World wide organisations (UNESCO-Council of Europe 2001; UNESCO-CEPES 2001) have produced codes of good practice. Countries that are exporters of higher education (US, UK, Australia) have established codes and/or principles of ethical and/or good practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in the provision of education to foreign students. Those countries want to ensure that the behaviour of their national institutions does not in any way tarnish the reputation of the country's higher education system, which could jeopardise new medium/long term market opportunities.

The major concern for consumer protection has raised the possibility of extending quality and accreditation to transnational or borderless education, and Knight (2002: 13) recognises: '… frameworks for licensing, accreditation, qualification recognition and quality assurance are important for all countries, whether they are importing and exporting education services'.

---

3 It is fair to recognise that massification of higher education has also played a role in the loss of trust in higher education institutions and academics.

The EU and the Bologna process

The new European Higher Education Area (EHEA) that the Bologna process aims to implement will be a complex system of very diverse institutions, offering a wide range of quality (Amaral and Magalhães 2004; Veiga and Amaral 2006). At present, there are signs that the European Commission is moving from a cooperation paradigm to a competition paradigm, which corresponds to the emergence of the more neo-liberal development model that can sometimes be seen in European policies. The apparent convergence of the Bologna process with the Lisbon strategy has apparently reinforced this trend due to the stronger emphasis on the economic component of European policies.

Some of the visible signs of this changing paradigm are the increasing relevance on the efficiency of the higher education systems and the movement towards a stratified EHEA. Some examples are:

1. The document *Making the best use of resources*, produced by a working group set up under the Education and Training 2010 policy area.
2. The recent paper *'Institutional Profiles, towards a typology of higher education institutions in Europe'* supported by the European Commission.
3. The recent interest of organisations such as UNESCO and OCDE in rankings.
4. The proposal of the European Commission to create a European accreditation system based on multiple accreditation agencies, public and private, national and international, that need to be recognised by a central agency. And the proposal that higher education institutions should be allowed by their governments to choose any agency they prefer.

The proposal of the Commission is consistent with the idea of a stratified European Area of Higher Education, as institutions would be allowed to choose an accreditation agency adequate to their quality level. We can foresee that some accreditation agencies will address excellence at international level while others will be more appropriate to regional or local institutions. Some will accredit research universities while others will specialise in teaching-only institutions.

These efforts of the European Commission in the area of accreditation can be interpreted as a way of fighting the stubborn attitude of many European governments in considering that all higher education institutions offer similar quality. This is also consistent with the idea that the efficient use of research money should be concentrated in a small number of research intensive universities, clearly separated from the other higher education institutions.

Therefore, we can consider that quality assessment and accreditation can also be used as tool for the implementation of supranational policies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the rationales supporting quality assessment activities are far more complex that the traditional duality quality improvement/accountability suggests. Due to a number of changes, such as the emergence of markets as instruments of public regulation, the influence of New Public Management theories, globalisation, the proletarisation and loss of prestige of academics and the increasing influence of supranational agencies on higher education, it is possible to single out a whole set of different uses of quality.

There are three major trends that can be observed in this transformation process. The first is the increasingly clear shift from the social and cultural to the economic function of the university. The second is the lack of trust in the university as an institution that is visible in the move away from quality assurance systems – in some cases owned by the institutions themselves, or their representative agencies, as was the case in the Netherlands and Portugal – in favour of accreditation systems. The third is the increasing internationalisation of the quality systems.

Quality assurance and the Bologna and Lisbon objectives
Eric Froment[1]

The Bologna process and the Lisbon objectives are two important and distinct processes that have an impact on higher education in Europe. Currently, there is a tendency to converge these two processes even though they hold different visions and objectives in relation to higher education and lead to different consequences for quality assurance and quality assurance mechanisms.

Bologna and Lisbon: two major processes for higher education in Europe

Since 1999 – 2000, the Bologna process and the Lisbon strategy have been the driving forces for higher education reforms across Europe. Both are concerned with the creation of a European Higher Education Area and are examining the degree structures, the qualifications framework(s), doctoral programmes, research training and researcher careers, employability, relations with stakeholders, mobility, attractiveness and quality assurance.

Because the two processes share many aspects, there has been an increased tendency recently to combine and aggregate them even though each process has different characteristics in terms of decision-making, philosophy and goals.

Bologna and Lisbon: two distinct processes to be kept separate

The Bologna process involves 45 countries and includes national authorities, higher education institutions and students. It promotes a reform agenda and the adoption of a set of common structures and tools. It is more flexible and therefore encourages rethinking and reform jointly.

The Lisbon strategy covers the 25 European Union member states – a smaller Europe than in the Bologna process – with the European Commission and the heads of state in charge. It promotes ambitious economic and social goals. These objectives mean that the Lisbon strategy **could** view the universities as important partners, but **only** because of their research activities. It emphasises excellence in research and innovation, concentration of resources and global competitiveness. These concepts – excellence, competitiveness, concentration of resources – are all part of a new discourse on higher education. The Lisbon strategy is also concerned with the improvement of employment and skills for the workforce. However, because it is a strategy, it lacks the flexibility of the Bologna process.

The question that can be asked is whether these two distinct processes are promoting the same type of European Higher Education Area.

The following table compares the two processes in terms of their starting points, the way decisions are made, their goals and their underlying philosophy:

Bologna	Lisbon
Focuses on adapting higher education to the needs of European society at large	Starts from the economic needs of a European knowledge society and looks at building a higher education sector to achieve this goal
Can be described as an open process looking for *cooperation, diversity, flexibility, reference points, creativity*	More driven by the demands of the economy and is about *competition, top research, excellence, ranking, technology, innovation*

---

1 Eric Froment, Former President of University Lumière-Lyon 2, France and Former President of the European University Association.

The current tendency at European level is to look at the Bologna process as an element of the Lisbon strategy. This is the result of the European Commission actions, and has important consequences because the Lisbon strategy takes a narrower view of higher education activities. It is focused mainly on research, innovation and hard sciences. As an example, the European Institute of Technology will be concentrate on research and innovation in a limited number of fields in the hard sciences. The main goal is to build a few top class research institutions and not worry about improving the whole higher education and research system.

At the same time, one of the goals of the Lisbon strategy is to improve the qualifications levels of the workforce. Therefore, it gives priority to vocational training. The stress on the Copenhagen process ignores the reform efforts of higher education institutions because the institutions are not party to the discussions. As a result, the progress made by higher education institutions to address the issue of employability and lifelong learning in the Bologna process has not been sufficiently considered.

Consequently, we now have two qualifications frameworks for Europe: one as part of the Copenhagen process and one as part of the Bologna process. This is a very confusing situation. It is as if the decisions taken in Bologna have been brushed aside and, if that is the case, then students and higher education institutions have also been brushed aside. This is an important consideration because, if the Bologna process has been implemented successfully it is thanks, in part, to the fact that the process was not top-down but was achieved through a dialogue among all concerned.

Given the current developments, one may well ask if the Bologna process is at risk and if the European change process will look totally different in the near future.

What does this mean for QA?

If the two processes are combined too closely, there is a risk of ending up with a totally different European Higher Education Area. Let us take quality assurance as an example (a similar analysis can be made of other areas such as funding or governance).

The Bologna process focused initially on quality assurance agencies (cf. Prague Communiqué, 2001). Since the Berlin Communiqué (2003), the focus has shifted to the role of higher education institutions and has emphasised a diversity of approaches and a move towards improvement.

The stress on excellence in the Lisbon process, however, tends to turn away from these emphases because of the need to give information to external stakeholders who are looking for excellence. This stress leads to a focus on rankings, whatever their worth.

The Bologna process has evolved from an emphasis on programmes and external quality assurance procedures to a focus on the institutional level, the importance of internal quality mechanisms and the self-evaluation phase, leading to a 'fitness for purpose' approach.

The Lisbon strategy tends to push back in the direction of detailed external quality assurance procedures, accreditation, and quality assurance at programme level. That is to say, it promotes tools that would provide information to stakeholders looking to develop contacts and contracts with higher education institutions.

Nevertheless, the Lisbon process could be useful in stressing the importance of the evaluation of research activities and the need to articulate it with discussions taking place in the Bologna Process, which are more concerned with education.

Conclusion

What happens at European level regarding higher education institutions and quality assurance is also linked to what is happening or will happen at three other levels: global, national and institutional.

First, globalisation justifies and legitimises the arguments underlying the Lisbon strategy. The development of global rankings emphasises the importance of this global horizon. We need to understand, however, that globalisation might lessen the attractiveness of European Higher Education Area and dilute its impact. In this context, the proposed register of quality assurance agencies working in Europe, which was discussed in Bergen, will help promote a specific European brand and help make the EHEA a reality in spite of the predominance of globalisation.

Second, national authorities have to manage the Bologna process and the Lisbon strategy in a coherent way. It is hoped that they will do so without confusing them. Nevertheless, every country will come up with its own combination, which may lead to a mix of quality assurance mechanisms.

If institutions are autonomous, they need to face this situation and define the future for themselves or through national or European associations. Specifically, they need to decide which of the two processes they will favour and keep the focus firmly on quality culture.

What is quality?

Jethro Newton[1]

Introduction

This paper addresses the topic 'What is quality?' Following an initial discussion of the origins of the quality debate, conceptual and definitional issues are considered. The paper then turns to the purposes of quality, including accountability and improvement requirements. After discussion of design and development requirements of quality systems, a perspective is presented on quality as 'practiced', 'used' and 'experienced'. By tracing the career of the concept of quality through the 1990s, we note the shift in emphasis from 'formal meanings' to 'situated' meanings which was detectable in studies of how academics were 'coping' with and responding to quality systems and practices. The paper concludes with an attempt to 'demystify' quality by considering lessons learned since the 1990s about quality policy and quality management, and from 'close up' and 'impact studies'.

Origins of the quality debate

Where did quality come from? As Vroeijenstijn (1995) expressed it: 'The concept of quality is not new: it has always been part of the academic tradition. It is the outside world that now emphasises the need for attention to quality. It is the relationship between higher education and society which has changed'. This encapsulates the profound changes in the context of higher education, including: growth and diversity; changes in size and nature of higher education; declining unit of resource; shift from 'elite' system to a 'mass' system; changes in funding methodologies; pressures for efficiency gains; and the challenges, still unresolved, of a changing student profile. This was accompanied by growing state interest in quality, demands for accountability, and the establishment of national quality agencies. By the end of the 1990s concern for quality and standards was global. From a UK perspective this was viewed in terms of 'the withdrawal of trust' (Trow, 1994) and the 'drive towards managerialism' (Kogan, 1989).

Conceptual and definitional issues

Defining quality: illustrating the confusion

Quite a debate brewed up across Europe regarding the concept of quality and how it should be defined. For Becher (1989), quality was 'a creature of political fashion'. For Neave (1986), it was 'elusive', a sentiment echoed by Harvey and Green (1993) who saw it as 'slippery' and 'value-laden'. Scott (1994) was quite clear that: 'No authoritative definition of quality in higher education is possible', reflecting the 'Lack of theory of quality in higher education literature' referred to by another commentator (Westerheidjen, 1999). Those who read Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* in the 1990s will have learned that while 'there is no definition…of quality…you know it when you find it!' (McConville, 1999). So, as Green (1994) concluded: 'In the last resort, quality is a philosophical concept'.

Difference between quality and standards

Several other keywords became caught up in the confusion. Firstly, it is important to be clear that whereas 'quality' relates to process (for example, the quality of the educational process experienced by students), 'standards' refers to outcomes, or achievement. The link between them can be expressed in terms of the contribution of the educational process (or 'quality'), to the attainment of a defined standard of higher education. Secondly, in education, standards relate to three areas of activity: academic standards measure ability to meet a specified level of academic attainment; service standards assess service provided; while quality standards can be described as norms or expectations expressed in formal statements about desired practice, for example the ENQA Standards and Guidelines.

---

1 Jethro Newton, Dean of Learning and Teaching, Professor of Higher Education, and Director of the Learning and Teaching Institute at the University of Chester, United Kingdom.

Applying quality concepts: quality as a 'stakeholder-relative' concept

How has the concept of quality been applied to the various quality assurance mechanisms, such as audit and accreditation? In common with Harvey and Green (1993), a pragmatic approach to definition is proposed, with quality being viewed as 'stakeholder-relative'. In other words, quality is not a unitary concept, it is open to multiple perspectives. Different interest groups, or 'stakeholders', have different priorities. For students and teachers it is the process of education; for employers, the outputs of higher education. As Green (1994) puts it:

'The best that can be achieved is to define as clearly as possible the criteria that each stakeholder uses when judging quality, and for these competing views to be taken into account when assessments of quality are undertaken'.

Applying quality concepts: quality as a mechanism

As Harvey and Newton (2004) have argued, quality as a mechanism refers to the processes of assessment, accreditation, audit, and external examination. Quality assurance involves checking the quality of a process or outcomes; audit, refers to an external or internal check on internal processes; quality assessment involves an external or internal judgement of performance against criteria, (for example, the 'quality' of teaching); accreditation is a process resulting in a decision that 'warrants' an institution or a programme; while external examination checks academic, competence, or service standards.

But how do these quality assurance processes, or quality mechanisms, map onto the various 'categories' of quality? Harvey and Green's 'classic' five-point categorisation (Harvey and Green, 1993), elaborated on recently (Harvey, 2006), is instructive.

Categorising quality: relationship to assurance processes

First, quality as excellence is associated with distinctiveness or standards. It has various connotations, such as league tables, benchmarks, standards-checking, or even a 'gold standard' of academic achievement. Assurance is achieved through external examiners, accreditation, or audit. With the notion of quality as perfection, or consistency, there is a shift from measurement of outcome standards, to measurement of process standards. This is a relative concept of quality more applicable to organisational and service standards than to academic standards. The notion of quality as fitness for purpose is in sharp contrast with elitist notions. The focus is on whether the product or service fits the stated purpose, e.g. the university's mission. This resonates with the requirement of an accrediting body or quality assurance agency for conformance to defined standards or, as in the UK, to 'subject benchmarks'. In turn, the ENQA standards, for example, provide a basis for generic statements or judgements to be made on organisational standards. The fourth of Harvey and Green's categories, quality as value for money, refers to quality judged against monetary cost and is seen by stakeholders in terms of return on investment. Typical assurance mechanisms include performance data, such as student completion or employment rates. The final category, quality as transformation, refers to the development or empowerment of the student through the learning process, or to institutional changes which might transform student learning. Various quality assurance mechanisms are applicable here; for example, accreditation may explore the value added element of 'widening access'. The principal evaluation mechanism is improvement audit, which is forward-looking and agenda-setting, and focuses on transformation.

This brief conceptual journey reveals, firstly, that the preponderant approach to defining quality is a pragmatic one and, secondly, that the preponderant approach to external quality evaluation is also pragmatic. Notions such as 'fitness for purpose' or 'value for money' all feature in the debate on quality in higher education. But all purport to be definitions of a concept that no-one really wants to define! Nor, it seems, are they based on any solid theoretical foundation (Westerheidjen, 1999; Harvey and Newton, 2005). In practical terms, the most constructive way forward is to adopt an approach which acknowledges

the relative nature of quality: relative to stakeholders, context, and to the particular assurance mechanisms with which it has become associated, such as assessment, audit, accreditation. As is argued later, quality is also crucially contingent on how it is used and experienced in practice, by academics and others who are impacted upon by quality assurance arrangements.

External and internal quality purposes

Accountability and improvement requirements: implications for institutions and agencies – the deal?
As Bjorn Stensaker has argued: 'Quality assurance is not just the latest fashion, but is a remarkably successful management fad', a success which 'is sustained by government endorsement, because it provides a means of securing accountability' (Harvey and Newton, 2005). Accountability requires external scrutiny of institutions and publishable outcomes, while quality enhancement requires that this is linked into a process of continuous quality improvement, at the institutional level, and at the level of the academic discipline. This has clear implications for institutions and national agencies, in terms of what one might term 'the rules of engagement'. According to these rules' universities are responsible for quality and standards. They require systems for managing and improving quality, and for meeting accountability requirements. These systems should be robust, transparent and premised on self-evaluation. Stakeholders require accessible information, while national agencies, in addition to conducting quality reviews, have an obligation to assist institutions in the discharge of their responsibilities. There is an unwritten 'deal' here, whereby the greater the transparency in how institutions maintain the quality of provision, and set and review the standards of awards, the more the need for <u>intense</u> external scrutiny will diminish.

Quality systems: design and development requirements

What are the components of an effective quality system?
This brings us to the paper's fourth theme: the design and development requirements of quality systems. Arguably, an effective quality assurance system:

- is clear specification of roles, responsibilities and procedures;
- enables institutional aims and objectives to be achieved;
- informs decision making;
- is free from individual bias;
- is repeatable over time;
- involves all staff;
- includes the specification of standards and acceptable evidence;
- prompts continuous improvement (HEQC, 1994).

In a similar vein, the development of a 'quality culture' to underpin a successful quality system requires:

- an open and active commitment to quality at all levels;
- a willingness to engage in self-evaluation;
- a firm regulatory framework; clarity and consistency of procedures;
- explicit responsibilities for quality control and quality assurance;
- an emphasis on obtaining feedback, from a range of constituencies;
- a clear commitment to identifying and disseminating good practice;
- prompt, appropriate, and sensitive managerial action to redress problems, supported by adequate information (HEQC, 1994).

Linking quality culture, quality systems and regulatory requirements

Of course, embedding the ingredients of an effective quality system, and developing a quality culture to support this, provides the basis upon which an institution can, firstly, meet the challenge of external audit, assessment, or accreditation and, secondly, develop a capacity for undertaking sophisticated self-evaluation. Here, Gethin Williams' notion of 'alignment' is invaluable. As Williams argued: 'The purposes of quality enhancement and institutional development…are <u>achievable</u>…if an appropriate <u>*alignment*</u> can be found… between *philosophy*, *technology*, and *context*' (Williams, 1996; emphasis added).

In Williams' framework: philosophy refers to 'the shared values and ideals which inform the approach to quality' (quality culture); technology equates with 'the range of instruments, techniques, and operating procedures which promote and support quality assurance and enhancement' (components of an institution's quality system); while context refers to the 'distinctiveness of mission' and the circumstances of an institution. The alignment sought is that between quality culture, the quality system, and the climate of operation (including the institution's own regulatory context).

Matching EQM requirements

A key question is: is EQM (external quality monitoring) viewed as a threat to be endured, or a challenge which presents opportunities? Given that EQM judges whether internal self-assessments - of strengths and areas for improvement - are accurate and informed, it follows that institutions should seek to 'match the external test' through effective, self-critical assessment, and to score well on what Williams (1996) terms 'the 'index of surprise'. Table 1 illustrates the requirements for 'matching the test' of EQM. The challenge is to influence the 'index of surprise' through accurate self-evaluation. According to this 'index', where an institution knows itself well there should be no unwelcome surprises!

Institutional quality approach	External expectations (subject level)	External expectations at institutional level
Ownership; acceptance of responsibility	Self-evaluation at subject level	Self-evaluation at institutional level
Setting and reviewing aims and processes of teaching and learning	Fitness for stated purpose	Robust quality systems and fitness for/of purpose test
Emphasis on continuous quality improvement	Quality enhancement	Quality enhancement and high level of critical awareness
Setting and meeting targets and priorities	Influencing the shape of the subject's 'quality profile'	Influencing the 'index of surprise'

Table 1: (Newton, 1997)

Beyond systems and definitions: a perspective on quality as 'practiced', 'used' and 'experienced'

Practical questions emerging during the 'quality revolution'

At this juncture attention turns to implementation issues, or issues around 'quality in use', and to things that 'get in the way' of quality management. A perspective is presented on quality as 'practiced', of quality as 'experienced', and how academics have responded to quality.

Quality managers were experiencing barriers to quality. One UK Vice Chancellor experienced it in terms of 'grotesque turbulence' (Webb, 1994). Amongst the key questions which emerged in the 1990s quality debate were:

- can quality be managed effectively?
- does accountability provide a basis for delivering quality improvement?
- can accountability and enhancement be reconciled?

- can external and internal requirements be balanced?
- how were academics receiving, responding to, and coping with 'quality' and 'quality policy'?

This posed challenges in sustaining the integrity and legitimacy of quality systems. For example:

- how are quality systems viewed by staff?
- is there divergence between the views of EQM bodies and the inclinations and experiences of university staff?
- is there divergence between 'managers' and 'managed', or between discipline communities?
- were quality systems associated with delivering improvements?
- was actual quality (of the student or staff experience) improving, or was it just systems that were being improved (enhanced bureaucracy as it were).

Academics coping with quality: emergent research questions
Much of this was either under-researched, or not being researched at all. As Smyth expressed it in the midst of the quality revolution: 'That we [academics] devote so little time to analysing what it is we do, …and how others are increasingly coming to shape that work,… must be one of the great unexplained educational issues of our time' (Smyth, 1995).

Later, Shore and Wright reflected similarly on the missed opportunities: 'The meaning of teaching quality has been transformed by the audit process…[Yet…]…This major transformation… remains curiously under-researched and under-theorised' (Shore and Wright, 2000).

Notwithstanding such observations, there was a small but growing body of literature which focused on academics' responses to higher education policy, including 'quality policy'. This was providing valuable 'insider' perspectives, on how quality was being perceived and used in specific institutional contexts. It was effectively deconstructing the concept of quality. The results and findings of these 'close up' studies (Trowler, 1998), and 'impact studies' (Horsburgh, 1999), of 'quality as used' or 'quality in context, enables us to trace the 'career' of the concept of quality, through the 1990s and into the present decade and to contrast the earlier, <u>formal</u> meanings of quality with the situated meanings which were emerging 'on the ground' (Newton, 2002). For many, quality systems were associated principally with meeting accountability requirements. Quality meant 'burden' and 'bureaucracy' rather than improvement. Questions arising in this research focused on how academics were 'coping' with quality, and what meaning quality had for them. For example:

- how do academics respond to quality assurance and monitoring regimes?
- how do staff engage with quality frameworks and policy?
- what meanings do front-line staff attach to different facets of quality?
- and are they adopters of policy, or resisters, or makers and shapers of quality policy and quality initiatives?

Deconstructing quality: from 'formal meanings' to 'situated meanings' – unravelling the politics of quality
Ethnographic study of 'front-line' academics' revealed that quality was taking on particular contextualised meanings. This contrast between the 'formal meanings' and the 'situated meanings' points 'the politics of quality' (Newton, 2000; 2002). Table 2 below, which encapsulates the contrast between the dominant formal meanings of 'quality' which emerged in the early 1990s, and the situated perceptions of 'quality' (of front-line academics) which were becoming apparent later in that decade, quality was becoming associated with 'ritualism' and 'tokenism', and 'impression management'.

Dominant formal meanings of 'quality' in the early 1990s	Situated perceptions of 'quality' of front-line academics: post-1990s
Quality as 'perfection' or 'consistency' Quality as 'value for money' Quality as 'total quality' Quality as 'management commitment'	Quality as 'failure to close the loop' Quality as 'burden' Quality as 'lack of mutual trust' Quality as 'suspicion of management motives'
Quality as 'culture change' Quality as 'peer review'	Quality as 'culture of getting by' Quality as 'impression management' and 'game playing'
Quality as 'transforming the learner' Quality as 'fitness for purpose' Quality as 'exceptional' or 'excellence' Quality as 'customer satisfaction'	Quality as 'constraints on teamwork' Quality as 'discipline and technology' Quality as 'ritualism and tokenism' Quality as 'front-line resistance'

Table 2 (Source: Newton, 2002)

As is evident from these contrasting meanings, whereas a formal definition of quality might be in terms of 'value for money', quality might be perceived by system users as a 'burden', as an 'add-on', or as a part of a compliance culture. Or, in contrast to 'quality' defined formally as 'peer review', quality was being experienced by many in terms of 'impression management' and 'game playing', with preparations for external assessment being carefully scripted or 'stage-managed'. Further, while 'quality' for some means 'fitness for purpose', for others those purposes are brought into question where quality is seen in terms of 'discipline', with an emphasis on improvements in quality assurance as distinct from improvements in quality. And while quality may mean 'excellence' in formal terms, experience may point to the 'ritualistic' nature of quality, with quality procedures being used to satisfy external requirements rather than internal enhancement purposes.

The messages and common themes which were apparent in studies of academics' day-to-day experiences of quality indicated:
    I.   the importance of 'users' views of quality policy;
    II. that staff develop 'coping mechanisms' and 'strategies;
    III. that front-line academics are makers and shapers of quality policy;
    IV. that the emergent properties of quality systems are important;
    V.   that transformative concepts of quality (Harvey and Knight, 1996) may in practice be undermined by situational constraints and contextual factors.

So, as was argued at the end of the 1990s:
'Any quality assurance model, method or system, will always be affected by situational factors and context. This leads to the view that the success of a system may be less dependent on the rigour of application, … and more on its contingent use by actors and protagonists, and on how the system is viewed and interpreted by them'. (Newton, 1999)

This in itself provides an important message regarding how quality is defined, in practice, by system users.

Conclusions: demystifying quality - lessons learned since the 1990s

What have been the principal lessons learned during the 1990s and the early part of this present decade?

Lessons learned…from 'close up' study and 'impact studies'
Lessons learned from 'close up' study and 'impact studies' include valuable insights into academics' responses to 'quality', and to a changing work context, a portrayal of the impact on academic identities (Henkel, 2000), and thirdly alternative perspectives and meanings to the 'formal' definitions and meanings of the early 1990s.

Lessons learned… about quality policy
Of the lessons learned about quality policy six are identified here:
   I.   quality is 'essentially contested', there are competing voices and discourses, e.g. front line academics and 'managers' may view quality differently;
   II. there is no 'blueprint' for a quality assurance system: 'close up study' reveals that the constraints of context may undermine a 'blueprint-driven' approach to the operationalisation, or definition of 'quality';
   III. quality is not a 'blank sheet': context and circumstance impact on our intentions;
   IV. there is a difference between the planned outcomes of policy and those which emerge through implementation; in other words, there is an 'implementation gap' between what we design into or expect of a quality system and what actually happens - academics are 'makers' and 'shapers' of quality policy and not passive recipients;
   V.   the notion of 'situatedness' suggests that any given quality assurance definition or system will always be affected by 'situational factors' and context;
   VI. in other words in the process of development and implementation quality policy becomes changed, even subverted; at the operational level, quality is relative to how front-line actors construe and construct 'quality' or 'the quality system'.

Lessons learned… about quality management and the management of change
Finally, lessons learned about quality management. Here, a further four lessons are identified:
   I.   Managers must learn to deal with ambiguity. We work on the edge of chaos, and achieving success in improvement initiatives is riven with difficulties. Often, things simply don't work out as we intended!;
   II. Are accountability and improvement reconcilable? Again a pragmatic approach is taken. While this tension may not be fully resolvable, acknowledging such tensions can be a basis for intervening with purpose, since it provides a basis for understanding prior to the design and implementation stages;
   III. Are higher education organisations rational, manageable entities, and are quality managers 'change heroes' or 'passive victims'? The view is taken here that managers are neither one, nor the other, and that even where turbulence and uncertainty predominate higher education organisations are not beyond purposeful intervention by managers;
   IV. Finally, to manage quality or to manage change effectively, institutional managers must assess the current and emerging climate of operation, and respond meaningfully and purposefully on the basis of such an assessment. Arguably, self-evaluation - the hallmark of a mature approach to quality - provides an appropriate basis for achieving this.

But of course, it remains true that universities often find that it is difficult to be self-critical, even more so in today's competitive environment. And so the challenge remains.

3. QUALITY CULTURE – INSTITUTIONAL CASES

Dealing with ambivalences – strategic options for nurturing a quality culture in teaching and learning

Oliver Vettori, Manfred Lueger and Monika Knassmüller [1]

Introduction: 'discovering' quality

Considering the abundance of publications dedicated to quality issues in higher education in recent years, one could very well come to the conclusion that the topic is quite fashionable and its relevance rather new. Yet such an assumption would be too simplistic: in point of fact, quality has always been of great importance to academic institutions (especially with regard to their self-image). What has changed though, is the way in which it is perceived and handled: over the course of the past few decades, quality has quickly become a 'buzzword' in the higher education community - a systematically pursued area of public significance with a multitude of strategies and approaches dedicated to its 'management' and 'assurance'. Many of these developments can be directly or indirectly attributed to the so called Bologna Process, but in fact the reasons for this change are manifold, including the massification and diversification of higher education, difficult resource situations, a consumerist view on universities or an increased public and political demand for 'accountability' (cf. Hodson & Thomas 2003, Brennan & Shah 2000, Schnell & Kopp 2000).

Against the background of such often unfavourable conditions, most European Higher education institutions (HEIs) have developed ambitious strategies and concepts for improving their teaching and learning quality, which are often quite similar (cf. Schwarz & Westerheijden 2004). Nevertheless, there are still some important differences which can at least partly be ascribed to contextual factors. As an admittedly multidimensional and perspective-bound construct (cf. Harvey & Green 1993), quality is deeply connected to an organisation's culture. Thus, quality notions provide a framework for institutional perceptions and actions. As such, they are influenceable but not controllable through managerial concepts. Therefore, the challenge for any university management lies in creating a setting that is conducive to strengthening an internal quality culture, not to managing this culture. This task is further aggravated by the fact that each decision is contingent on different understandings of quality, leading to dynamic situations of great ambivalence. Corresponding decisions never lead to mere positive consequences and desired outcomes but also yield un-intended negative results (which is, obviously, once again dependent on the observer's point of view). In this respect, it is not enough to accept quality's multi-dimensional character as an unchangeable reality, excusing decision-makers from defining it more specifically (cf. Laske et al. 2000). It is rather important to deal with this internal heterogeneity of notions and actions by focusing on different areas, without losing sight of the coherence and consistency of the decisions with the overall strategy. Activities and measures which run – even symbolically - contrary to the conceptual framework, interfere with its implementation. It is important to be aware of such contradictory strategies, which will be at the core of the following discussion.

Following a short description and interpretation of EUA's quality culture approach, we will analyse some of the most critical areas for decision making (or *zones of ambivalence* as we tend to call them here) as well as outline some options for dealing with those difficulties in a way that will not thwart the approach's main principles. In the final section we will identify some basic conditions and strategies for nurturing an institutional quality culture.

1 Oliver Vettori, Head of Teaching Evaluation & Quality Management Unit at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, Austria; Manfred Lueger, Professor and Quality Management Director at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, Austria: Monika Knassmüller, Assistant Professor, Institute for Public Management at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, Austria.

Quality culture as a comprehensive approach for organisational development

The Quality Culture approach promoted by the EUA (cf. EUA 2006, 2005), differs clearly from traditional quality assurance strategies, dedicating more attention to development-oriented and value-based aspects. Although Sursock (2004) goes a little bit too far when naming the EUA approach more 'neutral' than most others – ideological issues may be different, but they are still present –, it still stands out positively from a number of rather technocratic top-down concepts of recent years. In the quality culture perspective, quality is not beheld as a process that can be operated through evaluation and measurement procedures alone, but as values and practices, that are shared by the institutional community and that have to be nurtured on many levels (e.g. by considering the subcultures in the respective academic subunits) and by various means at the same time. The approach demands the involvement of multiple internal and external stakeholders, acknowledging the fact that a quality culture cannot be implemented from above, although strong leadership may be necessary for starting and promoting the process in the first place. Quality measurement and quality control are undoubtedly important elements of such an approach (as they are of any quality management system), but they cannot be regarded as quality guarantors per se, rather needing to be embedded in an overarching framework that is in line with the institutional objectives and focuses on continuous improvement.

The concept deliberately refers to two components - *quality* and *culture* - yet without any further theoretical explications. The scope of this article is far too limited to overcome this lack satisfactorily, but we will nevertheless try to delineate a few theoretical assumptions that will provide the groundwork for our later considerations. As we have seen before, quality can be conceived as a construct with multiple dimensions that has to be contextualised, i.e. each quality notion needs to be specific. As such, quality (and each *understanding* of quality) is already embedded in several contexts, of which an organisation's culture is one of the most important ones. In our perspective, culture is not fixed and stable, but can be regarded as the result of multiple interactions, involving all participants of these interactions (cf. the works of Froschauer 1997, Weick 1994, Smircich 1985, 1983 or Allaire/Firsirotu 1984).

Accordingly, the focus lies on developing structures of social meaning *(sense making)*, which form the basis of every interpretation of organisational activities, events or observances and their interconnection with specific action sequences. Geertz (1993, p 145) rightly points out: 'Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action; social structure is the form that action takes, the actually existing network of social relations.' As this interpretative process takes place permanently and depends on specific contexts of action, organisational culture is in a state of continuous and dynamic change and is not necessarily homogeneous, thus reflecting an organisation's internal complexity. As a result, a university's culture has to be comprehended as a historically grown social phenomenon that is very likely differentiated into several subcultures, but without guaranteeing that the participants are completely aware of the single components.

With this understanding of organisational culture in mind, we can identify four basic premises that should be kept in mind in the later sections:

▌ It is hardly reasonable to speak of 'the' quality culture, but of (a) quality culture in general. Within any university, quality notions differ distinctly between various groups of actors (e.g. university management, academic staff, administrative staff, students etc.) and even within these groups (e.g. different academic fields). In this respect, the university management is just one actor/stakeholder among others, which makes managerial quality concepts a very legitimate position, but certainly not the only one. If a quality culture should indeed be sustained by the whole organisation, its basic principles have to be largely shared or at least accepted.

- Differing quality notions can eventually be traced back to group (or subculture) specific norms and values, indicating that many culture-relevant aspects are located on a level that is scarcely accessible or alterable, but nevertheless affects organisational attitudes and actions to a considerable extent. In many ways, such latent components are at the base of culture, as they underlie most conscious operations. Schein (2004) names them underlying assumptions, encompassing beliefs, habits of perception, thoughts and feelings that are unconscious yet taken for granted.

- Unless newly founded, universities already have quality cultures of their own. The main challenge lies in changing this informal and implicit culture to a formal and explicit culture and in making the difference understandable (cf. EUA 2006: 18). At the same time, any activities dedicated to this aim have to take the hitherto existing structures and processes into consideration as well.

- The quality culture approach is closely related to the concept of organisational learning. From a theoretical perspective, irritations (e.g. based on feedback) in the form of structural modifications (e.g. curricular alterations) get incorporated into an organisational system of actions over the course of the learning process (cf. Luhmann 1997). In order to reconstruct this learning process, it is necessary to understand the conditions that lead to the formation of such irritations, as they are not simply a subject to perception, but nevertheless result in a palpable alteration of structures of action. Thus, a certain sensitivity for specific irritations (i.e. an awareness of quality and quality criteria respectively) is required. Influencing the patterns of explanation and interpretation that prevail in a certain organisational context will – at least in a long-term perspective – produce better results than simply reworking evaluation methods or implementing new procedures (even though both sides are obviously interrelated).

Zones of ambivalence

Self-evidently, the implementation of quality-directed actions and initiatives does not always proceed smoothly and friction-free. Strategic decisions regarding quality can be characterised as being settled along a continuum of different options, which are defined by at least two poles. A decision might usually benefit certain developments to the detriment of others, leading to trade-off situations. The decision-making process is even more difficult and complicated if all options are interrelated to different advantages, depending on the dimensions that are considered as relevant. Thus, the effects of choosing any of these options will lead to benefits as well as to drawbacks. In such situations, the decision-makers face the challenge of finding a reasonable order of preferences, which should correspond to the university's overall objectives.

It is thus necessary to be aware of the ambivalent character of each such decision. Even if quality management can not be oversimplified as a zero-sum game, every decision that is presumably aiming at increasing quality (by pre-specified criteria) has to be checked for its (unintended) negative effects. In the following sections we want to describe four of the most important continua for strategic decisions - or *zones of ambivalence* as we label them here.

Zone 1: Management-driven versus stakeholder-oriented strategies.
This first continuum tends to be one of the most difficult for any decision-making body to deal with, as it touches the very base of their self-understanding. As we have argued before, sustaining an organisational quality culture requires participatory efforts by all organisational members and the encouragement of quality awareness on various levels. Thus, such a strategy can only be realised by closely involving all relevant stakeholder groups and by considering their often diverse perspectives. On the other hand, this may stand in contrast to some of the most popular management concepts, as it implicates the redistribution of power and responsibilities and requires a redefinition of the role of leadership.

Within a stakeholder-oriented approach, the university management represents just one of various perspectives, although certainly a rather privileged one due to its higher probability of being asserted. As the results of EUA's Quality Culture Project have shown (2006:17), centralised strategies ensure the uniformity of efforts and their compatibility with the institutional mission, yet are less inclined to generate ownership for quality processes on any other level than the management's.

However, even though empowering the other stakeholders might be the most successful strategy in order to generate acceptance and commitment, it will constrict the predictability of developments and pose a serious demand. Decision-makers are confronted with the challenge of handing over some of their competences and may need to pull out of the operational implementation process, at least partly. This will prove even more difficult, if the quality initiative was a top down approach and if the university management regards itself not as a mere promoter of the process, but as its main mover.

These problems can be partly overcome by accentuating the role of *leadership*. Leadership does not stand for managing (and thereby controlling) the realisation/implementation process to its very end, but for conveying perspectives and ideas, persuading different actors and motivating them to participate in the process. As a consequence, *strong leadership* does not mean to determine and enforce a multitude of decisions in person, but to negotiate them in a way that makes them acceptable and allows for the delegation of responsibility.

Zone 2: Control-oriented versus development-oriented paradigms of evaluation.
The character of evaluations (as the traditionally most important way of measuring quality) plays an important role, since formative and summative evaluations adhere to different objectives and require different procedures (cf. Chelimsky & Shadish 1997). A quality culture definitely needs to emphasise formative feedback loops, but this depends on changing the attitudes towards evaluation and assessment, reframing them as a feedback-oriented basis for quality development. From a managerial perspective though, summative performance assessments may provide more useful information for steering processes, which may lead to conflicting situations, especially if data gained from formative evaluations is interpreted for summative purposes.

As with many other (though more business-related) organisations, higher education institutions show a growing tendency to influence or even control processes based on adequate information (e.g. performance indicators). Evaluation results (which always include a certain element of assessment) seem especially suited for such a purpose. However, as universities have more to do with complex teaching and learning *processes* than with predefined programmes in the sense of classic programme evaluations, summative/assessive evaluations are not always appropriate or reasonable. On the one hand, the desire for information-based decision-making is very understandable – especially in institutions which traditionally depend on *knowledge* on many levels – and should be met to a certain degree. On the other hand, at least the more traditional forms of evaluation in the area of teaching and learning (e.g. course evaluations or student ratings of teaching) are not able to provide an adequate assessment of a construct as complex as quality. As feedback instruments for the teachers themselves, these evaluations are a useful source of information, yet as a controlling tool for the university management they face some serious constraints. While indicating certain problems, this type of evaluation rarely allows conclusions regarding the causes and conditions of these problems. In addition, such evaluations are often perceived as an inappropriate means of control, which certainly does not promote the empowerment-principles of a quality culture. And last but not least, most evaluation procedures lack a system of reasonable and well-coordinated follow up activities.

Zone 3: Standardisation versus innovation.

If procedures of evaluation and quality measurement are not integrated into a broader framework of quality management and development, they may well degrade to a bureaucratic ritual aimed at the compilation of reports and numbers. Although establishing a certain degree of routine is necessary for every organisation in order to reduce complexity and ease the day-to-day work, the system may very well gain momentum in terms of self-reference and self-interest, leading to results without practical relevance. In many cases, evaluations tend to take on a life of their own, emphasising their own accountability function and complying with administrative obligations. Such developments are often characterised by bustling activities but do not necessarily meet the actual quality requirements. This is mostly true for bureaucratically organised evaluation systems, which *signal* that quality issues are taken very seriously, but without really *taking them seriously* (at least not in terms of an intended cultural change). Introducing a special quality assurance office/unit, for example, does not make sense if the institutional responsibility for quality is (even symbolically) shifted to this unit: process ownership has to be resident on various other levels throughout the institution.

A similar view can be taken on the role of standards within a quality culture. A network of general formal standards (often in the form of *minimum standards*) constitutes a necessary framework for a well-functioning quality assurance system by representing the points of reference for any measures and procedures. On the other hand, standardisations and regulations should not get too rigid or comprehensive for two main reasons: firstly, most universities can be characterised as organisations with a high degree of internal differentiation/heterogeneity, as we have argued before. Thus, standards can rarely claim general validity. It is important to find a way of accomplishing obligations without losing sight of the differences in detail. Secondly, standards tend to standardise everything. What seems trivial and even desirable at first glance is not without problematic consequences. Standardisation often constricts the scope for innovation and experimentation, which are necessary preconditions for any organisation's ability to learn. From this point of view, standardisation and innovation can be seen as conflicting concepts (cf. Stensaker & Norgard 2001). Recapitulating, it can be stated that any higher education institution has to accept a certain amount of risk and uncertainty, even if this seems to restrict its manageability.

Zone 4: External versus internal relevance.

Quality is increasingly being considered as a key factor in promotion and competition. As a consequence, many quality management systems seem to be outward-oriented, emphasising more the universities' external presentation than its internal development processes. Admittedly, a university's reputation and its dependence on external institutions (e.g. in the context of funding/budget) can be extremely influential factors for internal quality assurance. And if the stakeholder-oriented approach to quality is to be taken seriously, one has to acknowledge that there are not only internal stakeholders to be involved (even though we have so far focussed on them). External expectations and quality notions – which are strongly related to the concept of accountability - have to be considered as well. Terms such as 'Controlling' and 'Cost-efficiency', which have infiltrated the higher education sector from more business-like contexts, play a constantly growing role within quality management concepts. It is clearly observable that – due to such broader trends as the *massification* of higher education – universities are facing increased demands for economising and rationalising their educational programmes (cf. Schnell, Kopp 2000) and that criteria such as efficiency and cost-benefit-relationships are becoming more important for internal decision-making (cf. Hermann 1997). The goal is no longer to achieve an increase in quality, but to guarantee quality at low cost.

This does not have to be a negative development per se. It is, however, necessary to find satisfying answers to the question of how to combine internal and external demands in a reasonable, non-obstructive way. If a university aims at gaining a quality certificate awarded by external agencies (e.g. national or international accreditation bodies), all efforts should be directed towards this goal. It would be an illusion, however, to assume that these efforts will also automatically lead to internal quality improvements. In this regard, many important lessons can be learned from the UK experiences since the 1990s (cf. Hoecht 2006, Hodson & Thomas 2003).

Controversially, labelling alone does not guarantee a successful adoption/implementation of the quality culture approach, yet it may serve as a welcome boost to the image. In some cases, such a strategy might even be counterproductive, especially if evaluation routine and ritual prevents the results from being taken seriously. On the other hand, it is necessary to be aware of the fact that external pressure can increase internal sensitivity for quality issues and facilitate the implementation of measures that are unpleasant or unpopular. Nevertheless, it is important for a university to respond to environmental conditions and external demands, thus ensuring the institution's connectivity to developmental changes of the educational system or society at large.

Minimising risks by encouraging trust

The previous comments may seem sceptical towards a functional notion of culture (e.g. by Peters & Waterman 1982), where organisational culture is understood as one factor (among others), which fulfils a certain function for the organisation's success and can be rationally managed. Our own argumentation focused on several zones of ambivalence that form the framework for any quality development in teaching and learning and which depend on diverging goals and interests, such as management-driven versus stakeholder-oriented strategies, control-oriented versus development-oriented evaluation paradigms, standardisation versus innovation or external versus internal relevance.

Even though the apparent bipolarity of the zones of ambivalence described above might lead to such assumptions, there is no 'happy medium' which can do justice to all the interests and objectives involved in the decision-making process. As we have shown above, it is certainly necessary to strike a reasonable balance between the various options – but this balance depends on the culture(s) an organisation has already created and/or strives for. Every decision has some specific consequences. Some options are opened, while others are closed. This might seem trivial, but is often disregarded in daily practice. The importance of latent aspects is often underestimated. If specific actions stand in contrast to these organisational values, they will face some serious difficulties in order to find resonance or even get accepted. As a result, even the best intentions can have some unintended or even counterproductive side-effects and finally weaken the internal quality culture. Consequently, there are two types of strategy that are not suitable for this purpose, even though managerial intuition might indicate the opposite. Providing a specific set of obligatory requirements can help set some necessary standards, but this will excuse the other actors from taking their responsibility and deprive them of their autonomy. A system of permanent quality control can help to make processes more transparent, but will discourage the other actors by showing distrust in their competences and commitment (cf. Hoecht 2006). Both strategies will provoke a purely formal approach to quality (striving for the fulfilment of formal criteria that can be more easily handled but are not necessarily the relevant ones) and could even lead to a collective rejection of the overall quality strategy, without ever approaching the issue openly.

Adopting a quality culture approach requires two strategic decisions that do not sit comfortably with traditional (quality) management approaches. Firstly, it is necessary to *empower* all actor groups that hold a stake in the teaching and learning processes (stakeholder-orientation), enabling them to develop their own quality goals, initiatives and measures (within the overall framework defined by the institutional mission) and making productive use of the actors' self-organisational abilities (cf. Fetterman 2001). Secondly, this depends on a huge amount of trust that these groups are willing and able to support such an endeavour. This means that all members of the university are held responsible for the organisational developments (cf. the qualitative approaches of e.g. Patton 2002 or Shaw 1999).

Admittedly, such strategies are not without risk, especially for the university management. It means giving up at least part of the control, even though external stakeholders would rather see a tighter control. And, since there is no guarantee of success, the decision becomes even more difficult, for, paradoxically, in the end the management could be held responsible even for handing over responsibility. However, such risks can be minimised to a certain degree, if the quality culture concept finds its way into areas of daily and practical relevance and attracts interest and acceptance, internally as well as externally.

But not only has the university management to take risks. Teachers have to be able to trust in a satisfactory appreciation of their commitment and feel that their contributions are not devalued by rigid formal controls. In the same way, students need scope for trying and testing their new knowledge, skills and competences in a fault-tolerant environment. In this regard, mutual trust relies on the expectation that developments cannot be steered in a precisely predetermined way, but that it is safe to count on the endeavours of all participants in the process.

As can be seen from our argumentation above, the whole quality process has to be accompanied by trust- and confidence-building actions. The EUA report on the Quality Culture Project (2006) states the importance of information for developing a quality culture. But even more important than a well-designed system for circulating information is communication in the meaning of *reciprocal reconcilement*. The corresponding efforts have to build up on the already existing organisational culture, which has usually been developed over a long course of time and is unique. With respect to such cultural peculiarities, it is not enough to copy a standardised model of quality assurance and development and hope that a strategy that has already been successful at another university will have similar success in one's own institution. It is necessary to acknowledge and consider the historical, political and social characteristics of a certain quality culture and to develop strategies that are adequate for such conditions. It is only then that the quality culture approach will have a chance to actually achieve results instead of degrading to a new variant of impression management restricted to some glossy management brochures.

Steering by engagement - Towards an integrated planning and evaluation framework in higher education institutes

Deirdre Lillis[1]

Introduction

This article is based on the findings from a study of the introduction of nationally agreed Performance Mangement and Development Systems for academic staff in Ireland. The paper presents a model for an integrated strategic planning and evaluation framework and the rationale behind it is discussed. Conclusions are drawn and areas for further research are identified.

At its simplest level, strategic planning has a focus on future planning in which current activities are reviewed. Self study focuses on reviewing current activities from which future plans are outlined. The programmes are rarely fully integrated within a HEI and they may be serving different purposes. The strategic plan may be required by a funding agency and the self study programme may be required by a quality assurance accreditation body for example. There is a strong case to be made for integrating the programmes which includes streamlining the significant overlap between them and increasing cohesion. The overhead involved in taking staff away from their core duties to participate in strategic planning and self study is significant and the benefits should outweigh the costs. Lack of integration increases this overhead which can lead to duplication of effort and frustration for the participants. Separate programmes can also lead to divergent trajectories. In an extreme example an institutional strategic planning programme, undertaken using a top-down process model, might set a strategic direction for the Institution which might include strategic alliances with other Institutions, a revised portfolio of course offerings of most relevance to the marketplace and research centres which have the greatest potential for commercialisation and income generation. A School or Department self study, undertaken using a bottom-up model, may arrive at very different and equally legitimate conclusions on the same topics. The individual academics, busy directing their energies into their own research, may well be oblivious to both. The end result is that the Institution, the School/Department and the individual are all heading in different directions. Although there is a strong case to be made for integrating strategic planning and self study programmes, there is very little literature which empirically tests the concept.

A comparison of the effectiveness of the strategic planning and self study programmes

To inform the development of an integrated planning and evaluation model, a key question which needs to be answered is what programmes were the most effective in leading to improvements. As the programmes have different process models this is a relatively complex issue and a direct comparison is difficult. The programmes were ranked by taking cognisance of the following criteria (i) the degree to which the programmes met their goals (ii) whether they tackled core academic issues (iii) the percentage of outcomes that could be ascribed to the programme (net outcomes) (iv) whether informants perceived the programmes to be effective and (v) other improvements arising. The results for these and detailed methodological descriptions are reported on in Lillis (2005) and Lillis (2006).

Table 1 summarises the effectiveness of the programmes under the criteria established for comparison.

Table 1 Summary of effectiveness of programmes under criteria established for comparison						
Criteria	**SP1**	**SP2**	**SP3**	**DA1**	**PR1**	**PR2**
Goals (50% threshold)	84%	75%	87%	100%	100%	100%
Effectiveness on core academic issues	50%	66%	86%	100%	92%	69%
Net outcomes	23%	3%	23%	75%	37%	30%
Informants	66%			100%		
Percentage of informants citing other impacts (positive)	Building shared vision (66%); improved strategic thinking (50%); Improved process management (33%); improved implementation (33%)			Building shared vision (50%); opportunity to review activities (33%); stakeholder consultation (15%); improved process management (15%)		
Percentage of informants citing other impacts (negative)	Overhead involved (50%); implementation (33%); process management (33%)			Overhead involved (50%); implementation (15%); process management (15%)		

Table 1 shows that the self study programmes were more effective than the strategic planning programmes on all criteria. Using the criteria established for comparison at the outset the author argues that ranking from most effective to least effective programme is as given in Table 2 (DA1, PR1, PR2, SP3, SP1, SP2)[2] .

Table 2 Ranking of programmes in order of effectiveness		
MOST EFFECTIVE	**DA1**	**DA1 Delegated Authority Self study** ▪ 100% of objectives complete ▪ 100% of core academic objectives complete ▪ 75% of outcomes were net outcomes ▪ 100% of informants thought it met some or all of its aims and objectives ▪ n=106 improvements identified at institute level of which 48% were completed
↓	**PR1, PR2**	**Programmematic reviews (PR1 and PR2)** ▪ 100% of goals complete for both programmes ▪ PR1 92%, PR2 69% of core academic goals complete ▪ PR1: 37%, PR2: 30% of outcomes were net outcomes ▪ 100% of informants thought they met some or all of its aims and objectives *Caveat : Note shorter timeframe for PR2*
	SP3	**School Strategic Planning programme (SP3)** ▪ 87% of goals complete ▪ 86% of core academic goals complete ▪ 23% of outcomes were net outcomes ▪ 66% of informants thought it met some or all of its aims and objectives *Caveat : SP3 was integrated with PR1 and therefore may not have been as effective as a standalone programme.*
LEAST EFFECTIVE	**SP1, SP2**	**Institutional strategic planning programmes (SP1 and SP2)** ▪ SP1 : 84%, SP2: 75% of goals complete ▪ SP1 : 50%, SP2 : 66% of core academic goals complete ▪ SP1 : 23%, SP2 : 3% of outcomes were net outcomes ▪ 66% of informants thought it met some or all of its aims and objectives *Caveat : Note shorter timeframe for SP2*

2 DAI – Delegated Authority Programme, PR – Programmatic Review, SP – Strategic Planning.

The reasons for this are being explored as part of further research but preliminary outcomes suggest that the process models adopted had a large bearing on effectiveness. The self study programmes were *'bottom up'* and facilitated staff engagement at all levels and were generally more relevant to the average participant. The self study programmes had strong external drivers linked to accreditation status of courses which the strategic planning programmes lacked. The self study programmes were more likely to tackle core academic issues. There is also evidence to suggest that the self study programmes went further toward strengthening the steering core (Clark 2004) through building shared vision, setting direction, increasing cohesion and breaking down barriers between *'The Centre'* and the academic heartland.

Steering by engagement - an integrated planning and evaluation model

The model for integrated planning and evaluation presented in this section can be best described as the middle ground between a *'top down'* and *'bottom up'* process. It is in effect a *'steering by engagement'* approach to use Clark's terminology (Clark 1998). The steering core is strengthened through meaningful engagement with the academic heartland and the model integrates some of the strongest features of the strategic planning and self study programmes in a *'Review – Plan – Implement'* iterative cycle. It was developed by paying particular attention to the effectiveness of the strategic planning and self study programmes in this study and it streamlines the overlap between the programmes.

Although grounded in empirical evidence the framework is intended as a first step only and is untested beyond the context of one particular Irish Institute of Technology. Work is underway at present to validate the model in four other Irish Institutes (Lillis & Thorn 2006). Nonetheless, the model may be a useful contribution to discussions on an integrated planning and evaluation framework for higher education.

Rationale and justification

Mintzberg notes that the more complex and dynamic the environment of an organisation the more decentralised and organic its structures need to be in response (Mintzberg 1998). Birnbaum concurs that in HEIs, when change is frequent and there are no precedents, a *'loosely coupled'*, adaptable approach is needed with decentralised controls (Birnbaum 1988). Thys-Clement and Wilkins (Thys-Clement & Wilkin 1998) and Bayenet *et al* (Bayenet *et al.* 2000) contend that a mixed model approach is needed which merges aspects of the *'top down'* and *'bottom up'* approach with a mix of proactive and reactive strategies.

There is consensus in the literature that, to be effective, strategic planning has to engage with the academic heartland and, therefore, the extent of a consultative process is a major factor in process design in higher education (Bayenet *et al.* 2000; Birnbaum 2000; Shattock 2002; Davies 2004; Henkel 2004; Tabatoni *et al.* 2004). This study is particularly interesting as it allows us to compare strategic planning, which is essentially a top down process, with self study, a bottom up process. Preliminary results from further work by the author suggest that there is a strong correlation between the level of engagement of the academic heartland and the effectiveness of the programmes – the more engagement the more effective the programmes were.

Clark contends that a *'strengthened steering core'* is a key feature of an entrepreneurial university and that improved steering capacity embraces both central management and academic units and transcends the top, middle and bottom layers of the organisation (Clark 1998). He maintains that this can be achieved by the active engagement of the academic heartland in institutional decision making and by setting a strong direction which is shared throughout but which also enhances initiatives emerging from all levels. This should be done in such a way as to remove unnecessary barriers between the academic units and the Centre and by increasing authority and responsibility at all levels. The crux of the issue was the programmes' ability to avoid collective responsibility on academic issues which required co-ordination across Schools and Departments and it was established that, in general, the strategic planning programmes did not address this issue. Lines of responsibility were more clearcut in the self study programmes however as the School was responsible for implementing the relevant outcomes.

The ability of the programmes to increase responsibility and authority at all levels and the level of engagement appear to be the most important factors in their effectiveness. It was inconclusive whether one or other of these factors in isolation is the most important one or whether it is the combination of both.

Model outline
At its simplest level the 'Steering by Engagement' framework can be seen as an iterative *'Review-Plan-Implement'* cycle.

Review
The cycle starts with a comprehensive review stage with self studies undertaken by academic, central services and cross-functional review teams as appropriate. Strong central guidance is provided in relation to the scope of the self study. All self study teams ask themselves similar questions but also have some freedom to extend the scope of the exercise to their particular contexts. This should be a rigorous and systematic review supported by formal environmental feedback mechanisms (e.g. graduate and industry surveys) and a review of trends in key performance indicators (e.g. registration numbers, retention, throughput etc). Self study teams produce self evaluation reports to an agreed template which differentiates between outcomes which can be progressed locally and recommendations for institute-level consideration.

The institution-level outcomes are collated centrally to inform the wider institutional self study. The institutional self study stage takes macro-level issues into account and includes a comprehensive environmental analysis (e.g. SWOT analysis phase of the rational strategic planning model).

Planning
Informed by this root and branch review an institutional planning phase then follows in which the strategic goals and main objectives are set. This phase takes the outcomes from the departmental and institutional review phase into account but also has the freedom to brainstorm and develop new ideas. Using the 'black box' approach the HEI is free to use whatever methodology it believes is most appropriate to its setting to develop goals and objectives. The mechanisms by which strategic objectives will be evaluated, major resource implications, risks and changes to the organisation structure are identified at this stage.

Once institutional strategic goals and objectives are set, each department then develops its own strategic plan which explicitly addresses institutional strategic priorities. In parallel, cross-functional project teams are established to progress relevant strategic objectives.

A two way communications process is an essential component of this model. Formal feedback is provided to departmental self study teams as to why their recommendations were/were not incorporated in institutional plans to increase the transparency of the process. Departmental plans also take cognisance of resource issues and major changes required. Mapping institutional goals to departmental plans provides a strong steering core to but allows departments some flexibility to include their own ideas. Departments have the flexibility to include additional department-specific issues (perhaps with the caveat that, in resource allocation, priority will be given to institutional objectives).

The documentation phase essentially captures the outcomes of both the review and planning phases. An institutional self-evaluation report can be produced to meet the requirements of the quality assurance agency. The strategic plan is produced in the format required by the funding agency or in a printed brochure format for public relations purposes. Faculty or departmental reports can be produced for course accreditation purposes. A multitude of formats and views can be produced but crucially all of them draw from same knowledge base. For this reason the review and planning phases should take place within a short period of time (no more than one academic year) to maintain momentum and currency.

Many accreditation agencies require an external peer review process for institutional self study. Appropriate peers can bring further fresh thinking to the organisation, can contribute valuable suggestions for improvement and can provide an element of benchmarking from their own experiences etc. Peer review remains a strong moderating force in the academic heartland and can be used as an additional lever for change initiatives but it is not generally a feature in institutional strategic planning models. The author contends however it is a useful exercise if only to bring closure to the review and planning phase.

Implementation & monitoring
In addition to putting plans into action the implementation phase incorporates an annual review of departmental / cross functional plans with each team providing a progress report against the original objectives of its plan and any recommendations arising from the peer review process. The review is carried out in partnership with the teams and is formative rather than summative in its approach. There is scope to retire or modify objectives or introduce new objectives on the basis of a changing environment. A mini-review of institutional goals and strategic objectives *vis à vis a* changing environment can be undertaken annually. This addresses the need for a fifth component to the self study model – the *'post-implementation audit'* outlined earlier.

Under the Performance Management and Development system (PMDS) outlined earlier, individual staff members develop their Personal Development Plans each year on the basis of their departments strategic plan (this is effectively the team development planning phase of PMDS).

Engaging the academic heartland
The *'Steering by engagement'* model engages with the academic heartland at three critical points. Firstly the academic heartland is involved from the outset in the initial self studies, the outcomes of which are collated for consideration at institutional level prior to setting institutional priorities. This provides departments with an opportunity to influence institutional goal setting, highlight their achievements and identify problematic areas. Discussions will most likely centre on issues which are of most relevance to the self study teams and increasing their ownership of the process. Many issues from the departmental self studies will be common to some, if not all, departments which may mitigate against the tendency of not facing up to weaknesses as issues cited by some or all departments less likely to be ignored. This bottom up approach captures issues at the coal face and engages the academic heartland in the process from the outset.

The second critical point of engagement is when academic departments are asked to develop their own plans in support of institutional priorities. Instead of being asked to implement someone else's predetermined strategies, departments have the flexibility to develop their own solutions to the challenges presented as appropriate to their context. By comparison to a model where solutions are developed by a small group of sages at the top of the organisation, this also significantly increases the chances that innovative solutions will be developed as the full capacity of the HEI's staff, through their respective departments, is being harnessed. Senior management teams can concern themselves less with the detail and concentrate on how well or otherwise the Institution's strategic objectives are being achieved.

The third point at which the academic heartland is engaged is through the development of annual Personal Development Plans which are aligned to their department's objectives. This increases relevance, ownership and maps some responsibility from the department to the individual.

Strengthening the steering core
The *'Steering by engagement'* model provides for this strong steering core at a number of key points. Firstly, departmental self studies are undertaken under central guidelines to agreed templates. Responsibility for completing the self study rests with the department. Collation of institutional level recommendations from the departmental self studies acts as a funnel whereby common issues are filtered through to inform

institutional review sessions. This increases cohesion and militates against special interest groups dominating or hijacking planning sessions to progress specific agendas. It also enhances that chances that weaknesses will be identified and addressed.

The second point where the model strengthens the steering core is at the institutional planning sessions. The comprehensive departmental and institutional review ensures that institutional goals are set on an informed basis. This is a considerably stronger starting point than the standard strategic planning model which depends primarily on a one-off environmental analysis. It also tempers the level of ambition that rational strategic planning permits and ensures that the constraints of the operating environment are considered from the outset. Self study on its own is open to the challenge if all change is incremental and a projection from the current state of affairs where no major changes are possible. The 'Steering by engagement' model takes the incremental changes proposed by the self study and provides an opportunity to compare them with the challenges faced by the Institution. Through a managed communication process departments can see the adequacy or otherwise of their proposed strategies in light of the changes in the environment and perhaps through comparison with other departments. The institutional planning sessions allow the HEI to take bold new steps into the unknown and radically change its direction if necessary; but crucially this is done on an informed basis and tempered by the reality of the organisation.

The third point at which the 'Steering by engagement' model strengthens the steering core is when departments are asked to produce their plans in support of institutional goals. Departments have responsibility for this aspect of the process and are guided by central institutional goals. They have the freedom, however, to develop their own solutions and strategies to meet these goals and this significantly enhances initiatives originating from all levels of the organisation.

Finally 'steering by engagement' requires a regular progress review system whereby departmental plans are reviewed annually with respect to the objectives set which again increases responsibility. The Personal Development Plans of the Performance Management and Development system increases the responsibility of the individual to assist in the attainment of the departments goals and are reviewed on an annual basis in tandem with the department's plan.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it is recommended that Institutions consider resourcing this process management element through existing quality or planning structures. The second recommendation is that funding agencies, government departments and quality assurance agencies share subsets of common information which they require on a regular basis from a HEI. Duplication and overhead within the HEI could be minimised if these agencies were to agree a common format and schedule for this information.

Instruments for raising quality culture in a network of universities
Karin Fischer-Bluhm[1]

Introduction

The following paper gives an account of the experiences of a network of seven Northern German universities. This network was founded in 1994 particularly to improve study programmes and teaching. The practicability and effectiveness of the instruments for improving the quality of studies and teaching, as well as the effectiveness of the implementation measures, are regularly monitored.

The paper is based on a dynamic, multi-perspective and multi-dimensional definition of quality. That is, quality involves an on-going process of improvement, is defined according to the points of view of the different actors and to different university functions (research, teaching). Furthermore, the paper emphasises the concept of quality culture. The current emphasis on external quality procedures sometimes leads to 'window-dressing'. By contrast, the Consortium of Northern German Universities strives for the development and usage of internal quality instruments, which measure quality independently and fairly, are embedded in transparent procedures, are discursive and action-oriented and take the perspectives of different groups of participants into consideration.

Cooperation of universities in network structures: the Consortium of Northern German Universities

Universities cooperate in networks with the objective of jointly reaching defined goals more easily than they would if the members were trying to achieve them separately. Successful networks distinguish themselves by the following criteria (Schott 2005: 143-145):

- autonomous and voluntary members who control and decide over their network
- horizontal and decentralised organisation
- confidence among the members that enables synergetic effects
- balance between stability and dynamism of topics and interactions
- a certain amount of heterogeneity for the differentiation of interests
- multiple interaction and functional chains

Michael Daxner, one of the founders of the Consortium, differentiates between networks in a region and those located in a metropolitan area (2004: 12). Within both kinds of networks common projects can be established jointly to gain deeper knowledge, as well as more effectiveness and efficiency with regard to enforcing common interests, investing resources or benchmarking. But only the universities in a metropolitan area can share their real (non-virtual) infrastructure for student and staff-member services. Among equivalent partners comparison will result in benchmarking because participants ask for the better practice of the best. Non-equivalent partners are not easy to compare, comparison is only understandable when the experiences and practices are exchanged. This requires more effort but fits more easily into the academic culture of autonomy in teaching and research. The topics or problems for new joint projects depend on the criteria of comparison and competition set between the universities. If the partners are financed from the same source they will emphasise those criteria that differentiate them from the others.

Networks can be distinguished economically from strategic alliances, consortia and fusions in which the tasks are delegated to a new organisation. But these alternative solutions would be a big drawback for quality culture in a university because they reduce the influence and responsibility of the individual university; the

latter would merely influence indirectly the concepts and procedures via annual general meetings. In the context of policy of higher education the terms strategic alliances and consortium are also used for co-operations without establishing a new legal form so that they are networks in the language of economic definitions.

The Consortium of Northern German Universities fulfils the network definitions by Dörte Schott and Michael Daxner: the seven different and independent Northern German universities in Bremen, Greifswald, Hamburg, Kiel, Lübeck, Oldenburg and Rostock form a regional network. The purpose of the Consortium is jointly performing quality assurance in studies, teaching and research. This task has been fulfilled successfully for the past 12 years and was developed as a challenge that constantly changes operatively. The Consortium conducts assessment measures/evaluations and projects in teaching and studies and exchange experiences.[2] The member universities regularly check and enhance their procedures for evaluation and implementation for their own quality assurance. At the moment, the Consortiums' instruments for quality assurance are taking the development of new curricula into consideration. Future cooperation will focus on collaborative inquiries, concept-developments and project work. The mutual consulting of, and advancement for, different actors in the member universities emerge as further areas of cooperation. Moreover, there is further bilateral cooperation within the network, for instance between universities which are located close together.

With regard to the organisation the Consortium members appoint the speaker and together fund the head office. The head office does preliminary work for the speaker, distributes information, coordinates the procedures in quality assurance projects, and prepares workshops and experience-exchanges as well as joint projects. An advisory board consisting of experts in quality assessment in research and teaching is then established with the goal of counselling the members and handling complaints effectively.

In the future, it will show whether the balance between stability and dynamism can be maintained. On the one hand, a recent change in office and changing political frameworks have led to a particular dynamism. On the other hand, the founding members still participate in outstanding events of the Consortium. The purpose of the Consortium has remained the same, although, the instruments and procedures may have changed.

Experiences with the instruments for quality assurance in the universities of the Northern German Consortium

In the following section the instruments used, as well as the resulting experiences, are described.

Evaluation of subjects
Since 1994 evaluation procedures have been jointly conducted in the Consortium of Northern German Universities. The discursive and action-oriented procedures fulfil the national standards set by the German Science Council and the German Rectors' Conference in 1996 and also those required nowadays by ENQA on the European level:

▌ thorough analysis of strengths and weaknesses (self-assessment)

▌ external assessment by peer review

▌ assessment meeting

▌ goal agreement for the consequences

▌ publication of the results

In the first cycle to 2003 twenty subjects were evaluated. Thus, 60 to 80 percent of the teaching staff and the students of the member universities participated in the procedures. The second cycle of evaluation began in 2004. The evaluation concept focuses now on the quantitative and qualitative results of studies (learning outcome), the development of quality management and the design of bachelor and master study programmes. At the moment the subjects of medicine and pharmacy are being evaluated.

For those who teach and learn the implementation of quality assessment is additional work, which is only reasonable if it leads to a benefit in the teaching and learning process. If the teaching staff does not see the benefit there is the danger that the self-evaluation will be written by a single person in such a way that all required criteria are fulfilled without regard to the facts and no staff member will much care about the consequences of the evaluation. The acceptance of the evaluation of subjects has risen enormously over the years.[3]

Bearing that in mind the evaluation in the Northern Consortium is designed with the following criteria:

Fairness

- Aims, objectives, right to participate and support are determined beforehand in an agreement between the dean and the university president.
- The presidential boards guarantee the faculty staff an independent analysis of strengths and weaknesses.
- Students participate in all phases of the evaluations.

Independence

- The evaluation designs as well as the criteria for all subjects are approved by the universities. Thus, the criteria for assessing quality are applied consistently.
- The experts are reputable representatives of their subject and they are impartial towards the universities in the Consortium. The University of Groningen always delegates an expert to the committee.
- The assessments and results of the evaluation are published. Thus, they are transparent to the public as well as to the scientific community.

Utility

- In order to assure the implementation of results goal agreements and monitoring have been introduced.

Consequences of evaluations

Based on the recommendation of the experts and the commitments established in the self-evaluation, the faculty develops goals and measures to implement the results of the evaluation process. The president checks whether they correspond to the expertise and the mission statement of the university. The presidential boards support the implementation of measures for instance with single, non-recurrent payments or by moderating conversations.

The negotiation and controlling of the consequences is organised in goal agreements and reports. They consist of the following elements:

- goals and measures determined for implementing the results
- persons responsible for carrying out the measures
- period of time for realising the implementation

---

3 Both the teaching staff as well as the experts stated at the assessment meetings and in interviews for the meta-evaluation by Hans-Dieter Daniel that the efforts mostly pay (Daniel, Mittag, Bornmann 2003).

Additionally, the status quo of the implementation is assessed with the aim of finding out whether the goals are still valid and whether the measures were successful. After two years the faculty completes a report.

Three different analyses of the implementation of evaluation results have been conducted so far. Two were carried out by Hans-Dieter Daniel, Sandra Mittag and Lutz Bornmann (Daniel, Mittag, Bornmann 2003 and Mittag 2006), one was done in the University of Hamburg. They all showed that more than 80 percent of the measures determined as consequences by those who were evaluated have actually been realised. The inquiry by Daniel et.al. illustrated that goal agreements after an evaluation procedure are a relatively reliable instrument to improve studies and teaching. Thus, with goal agreements the consequences from evaluation procedures become more effective.

Introduction of bachelor and master study programmes
The start of bachelor and master study programmes has shown that the faculties are not able to develop study programmes, conduct their accreditations and participate in the evaluation procedure at the same time. One solution to this problem without failing the goal to enhance quality is realised in the departments of history. Their representatives agreed on performing a so-called 'intelligent preparation': two workshops are carried out parallel to the development and introduction of the bachelor and master study programmes. Curricula are exchanged to provide an insight into the ways other faculties deal with problems and to establish common minimal standards so that students are able to change the university without an approval check from a professor. Topics that proved to be problematic in the course of the introduction of the study programmes will be identified and developed. Empirical inquires will be carried out on these issues. The evaluation procedure itself will integrate the results and will take place when the introduction of bachelor and master study programmes is complete.

Quality management at faculty level
The economic sciences faculties and departments chose another way out of the dilemma. They are working out a collaborative prototype for the description, introduction and trial of a quality management for studies and teaching. The concept will be compatible with academic work. It is expected to be transferable to other subject cultures.

The concept was drafted by six professors of management. Firstly, it consists of four elements that have to be implemented in all departments. Secondly, different communication and decision schemes compatible with the habits of quality culture in each university will be worked out. The four joined elements are:

1. The teaching staff define 'principles of proper teaching'. Students must have the opportunity to complain in case principles are violated.

2. Courses and study structures have to be evaluated regularly. Student surveys are conducted to review the acceptance of the courses, the context of learning and the services.

3. Features of practice in studies and teaching that are subsumable in indicators have to be assessed annually. The interpretation of these figures has to take into account the self-set goals of the teaching staff and European reference data.

4. Features of practice and collected data will be compared every year among the economic sciences departments (benchmarking). As a first step information about the new curricula in bachelor and master programmes will be exchanged.

The documentation of the results from surveys and benchmarking will be tested to find out what kind of documentation is necessary. The elements themselves are not new. The uniqueness of the project is to develop them together and exchange them and to analyze the results together.

Further projects
Various projects have been developed in the Consortium. The realisation of an idea depends on the degree of competition in the field and the expected benefit. Three examples:

1. The selection procedures for students have been an important topic. The presidential boards decided that selection is not a question of competition for excellent students but rather should be understood as finding potential students that fit the university and vice versa. For this reason, Lutz F. Hornke of the University in Aachen was asked to develop web-based self-assessments with specified profiles of the different subjects in Northern Germany. The goal of the project is to support the decision-making process of those interested in studying and to confirm their choice of subject. First tests are online for testing and validating. In the long term the duration of studies will decrease.

2. Meetings with experience exchanges and inquiries in the Consortium may also result in the decision to let the matter rest. For instance, the presidents initiated an inspection assignment to obtain software for all examination administrations of the bachelor and master courses of study. However, a common proceeding proved to be of little use as the existence of central and decentralised structures, existing habits and the integration into administration procedures differed greatly. So they agreed on exchanging experiences with the different structures and software.

3. Within a project on multimedia-based teaching material in the Consortium a round table has been launched with the aim of creating a collaborative platform and website for e-learning, because the development of multimedia-based teaching material was too expensive for the individual universities. They ran two successful projects financed by the federal government (for the minor subject physics and for methods of empirical research in social sciences). But the initial plan failed, because two federal states each promoted a platform for the universities and polytechnics within their respective boundaries. The project of the Consortium that spanned several federal states fell behind for political reasons.

The examples described so far demonstrate that there are a variety of different interactions at the Consortium with different impacts. The openness for new topics and the exchange of experiences of different groups is only possible in a network whose structure is stable enough for interaction, but whose members cope with current problems dynamically and in a differentiated way.

Summary

The network structure is a suitable form of organisation for the cooperation of universities in Northern Germany and to develop reflected and sustainable concepts in projects with autonomous, equal members. In the following, the opportunities and boundaries of the cooperation in the Consortium are summarised:

Synergetic effects: opportunities and risks
The synergetic effects in a network are an increase in quality in the fields of work as previously agreed upon, as well as sustainable and cost-effective solutions for future challenges. A network reaches its limits when someone from the outside or from above decides that the cooperation is to lead to results such as the loss of independence for partners, or even the closure of a particular institution.

Cooperation and competition

The cooperation in the Consortium concentrates on those areas in which the universities benefit from it, but do not compete with each other, e.g. common projects for developing teaching material, or self-assessments for student applicants. Even collaboration in the cases of dual careers of scientist couples is possible. But a jointly organised enrollment of students or recruitment of scientists is not possible due to competition. Nonetheless, the Consortium aims at promoting open competition, i.e. the universities develop and implement solutions on their own, and discuss them afterwards so that they learn the best practice.

Cooperation and reliability

The quality culture in a university is severely disturbed if the valuation of quality is perceived as being irrelevant, exclusively financially motivated or arbitrary. The greatest strength of the Consortium is that assessment procedures have been developed and applied which are transparent with regard to goals, method and usage of valuation criteria, and which generally follow the principles of fairness, independence and utility.

Autonomy and flexibility in cooperation

In contrast to other forms of cooperation, the network structure includes the opportunity to decide within each project in which working phase cooperation is of benefit. In the evaluation of subjects the quality assessments take place jointly, whereas the formulation and implementation of the consequences is the responsibility of each university. Each presidential board accounts for negotiating the goal agreements, supporting the departments with the implementation, and discussing the results at university.

Consequently, the cooperation in a network has proven to be the best form for the Consortium to jointly develop a quality culture in agreed topics. The conducting of the valuation procedures and projects follow the principles of transparency, utility and fairness, and the necessities of an academic habitus are met as they are discursive and result-oriented. They supply the universities with independent, fair valuation criteria and procedures and a cost-effective implementation of the procedures. At the same time the procedures can be adapted to changing general frameworks so that the universities continue to pursue their jointly set aims.

The participating universities maintain their autonomy and their responsibility for quality assessment measures, and for implementing the results. The members profit from a common increase in competences, a stable and proven infrastructure and a grown trust into the effectiveness of the collaboration.

In September 2006 the Council of Europe Higher Education Forum generated recommendations for the further development of quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area which, in fact, the Consortium of Northern German Universities had already been applying for some time. The procedures for developing quality are enhanced and adapted to changed requirements by including increasingly more qualitative approaches in methods and instruments. In the network, seven equal regional partners work jointly on the topics of quality assurance and quality development, and they continually make use of foreign expertise by cooperating closely with the University of Groningen (The Netherlands).

Promotion of quality culture in international cooperation with special focus on joint programmes

Axel Hunger and Ina Skalbergs[1]

Introduction

The development and implementation of a joint programme involving international partners requires from its developers specific considerations of quality issues which are not relevant when operating a study programme within a single national context. On the one hand, the negotiation and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and the promotion of internal quality culture for such a project has to satisfy formal requirements on quality assurance in the higher education of the respective national contexts (e.g. accreditation, legislation). On the other hand, a common quality culture has to be cultivated in order to ensure mutual trust between the partners in the equality of quality of the institutions involved as well as provide mechanisms to evaluate and further develop the quality of the joint programme.

This article concentrates on the development of quality culture especially suited for joint programmes in an international context. The requirements in different phases are highlighted. Three phases can be identified as:

1) Set-up,

2) Consolidation, and

3) Maintenance.

The set-up phase concentrates on the promotion of a common quality culture between the partners involved in the development of a joint programme. The **consolidation phase** focuses on the implementation of quality assurance procedures which form the basis of the emergence of a common quality culture shared by partners. The **maintenance phase** builds up the routine of quality assurance procedures which are constantly tested and re-adjusted by evaluation procedures and thereby form the backbone to the promotion and maintenance of the common quality culture across partner institutions

The most challenging aspect in regard to a common quality culture in international cooperation is that quality culture is always more than a mere set of rules and procedures which can be 'mechanically' negotiated, agreed upon and implemented. Quality culture encompasses a more implicit consensus on what quality is and how it should be maintained and promoted. Nonetheless, this article is based on the conviction that quality culture can be consciously promoted. The procedure of promotion described in this article is based on the agreement of common goals from which indicators of success and quality measures are derived. By a conscious promotion of a common quality culture in international cooperation, potential failure of the partnership can be diminished because contradictions with existing quality cultures at partner institutions are avoided and the partnership is firmly based on common goals as the focus of cooperation.

The article is based on the results of the project 'Quality Culture III, Network 6: Programme Evaluations Joint Degrees' set up by the European University Association (EUA) and funded under SOCRATES by the European Commission. For this project, the University of Duisburg-Essen co-ordinated the network with following institutions: Heriott-Watt Unviersity (UK), Stockholm University (Sweden), Zuyd University (the Netherlands) and Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania).

Definition of 'Joint Programme'

As a basis to this article, the definitions of Joint Programme and related terms in higher education are clarified below.

'Joint degree' is specified as

❚ a single degree, awarded by two or more institutions after graduation from one jointly agreed programme, and

❚ is granted under the auspices of all the partners,

❚ one single graduation document is issued,

❚ the degree certification is complemented and explained by a Diploma Supplement.

'Double degree' is specified as

❚ two or more separate degrees, awarded by two or more institutions after graduation from one jointly agreed programme, and, while

❚ the number of degrees depends on the study phases at chosen partner institutions and can differ from the total number of partner institutions,

❚ complemented and explained by a Diploma Supplement.

'Joint programme' is specified as

❚ an overall term for a co-operative study programme based on a common curriculum agreed upon by the partners, while

❚ studies can be carried out in the framework of student mobility, based on Credit Transfer,

❚ not regarding any specific way to award the degree.

Joint programmes share following characteristics:

❚ joint programmes are developed co-operatively by two or more partner institutions,

❚ students are obliged to spend part of their studies at two or more partner institutions, and

❚ courses and exams are fully recognised by all partner institutions offering the joint programme.

The term joint programme is defined as an overall description for all co-operative degree programmes. The separation of the implementation of a study programme by two or more partners, on the one hand, and the definition of the degree(s), on the other hand, allows one to distinguish between the key aspects of planning, introducing, and running as well as defining and controlling quality of such programmes adequately. This construction allows one to discuss the most important relevant, different forms of implementation without mutual interference and, at the same time, to cover the whole spectrum of aspects.

Phase 1: Set-up

View of students and stakeholders
Considerations of quality must precede and guide the set-up and implementation of a joint programme. Defining the goals and the contents of the programme and choosing suitable partners and target groups as well as developing financial concepts are at the heart of a successful joint programme.

Understanding the quality of joint programmes – and their different ways of certification – has to be put in relation with the different expectations of the various partners of a joint programme. Stakeholders, such as parents and financiers, want to obtain properly educated and successfully graduated students. Students expect, besides education, additional services, such as tutoring or assistance in finding accommodation. Finally, students expect a better preparation for an international labour market (increased employability). Joint programmes enable departments and universities to establish programmes which they might not be able to set up by themselves, to find new sources of funding and to get an international reputation and higher rankings. Industry expects internationally trained students with adequate knowledge and competences.

The expectations of the target groups clarify the parameters according to which they define quality. Accordingly, quality assurance measures have to be implemented in order to observe the following:
- High standard of educational offers,
- High level of knowledge and skills of graduates,
- Relevance of qualification for the labour market,
- Services adapted to the needs of the culture of students in joint programmes,
- Innovation capacity of joint programme in respect to educational add-on and funding,
- Growing reputation of the departments and university involved.

The decision to develop a joint programme should be based on clear ideas about the goals and special benefits. Main goals related to joint programmes can be listed as follows:
- Increased intake of students,
- Increased reputation,
- Higher attractiveness of graduates for a globalised labour market. General add-ons of joint programmes are mobility as well as cultural and linguistic competences of graduates. In addition, institutions might chose strategic partnerships that serve specific interests,
- Extension of international co-operation between institutions of higher education,
- Alumni activities supporting international reputation and financing,
- Innovation: offer of programmes which are complementary or could otherwise not be offered. Partners combine individual specialties that give students a broader insight in a field of studies or even form a novelty,
- Development of human resources at university,
- Shared experiences on different levels (increased knowledge about different education systems, institutional strategies for internationalisation, different approaches to quality management etc.) and in different fields (research; teaching, knowledge transfer etc.),
- Share resources for the implementation of common aims.

Acceptance of the partners' quality

The difference of joint programmes, compared to the classical local degree programmes, is that partners have to agree on procedures for quality assurance that are acceptable to all participants, both externally and internally. The highest interlocking between partners in the field of academic education is a joint degree. To understand the quality aspects of joint programmes, the interaction between the partners has to be analysed.

Within this co-operation, the problem of achieving a quality system for joint programmes is that a unilateral adoption or merger of the quality systems of two or more partners is, in most cases, impossible for political or legal reasons.

A more realistic approach towards quality of joint programmes is that partners in joint programmes agree upon and mutually accept the systems of quality assurance instead of taking only the local requirements or try to find a partner with identical quality culture. A prerequisite for this is that all partners have a similar overall level of quality standards. If the partners agree that the procedures of the partner are different, but lead to the same level of quality in the framework of the common goals, accreditation is reduced to a local activity of each partner.

The latter proposal is the most likely to find application in the set-up and running of joint programmes. Accordingly, it is up to each partner to recognise the partners' quality culture as equal or fully acceptable. That also means that no single definition of quality can be given.

Another issue is to promote a common quality culture for the running of the joint programme. The promotion of the common quality culture builds on the goals of the joint programmes commonly agreed on by the partners. The goals lead to the definition of indicators and quality measures. Therefore, quality culture can be seen as common goals leading to indicators of success which verify the achievements of the goals. The definition of indicators, in turn, leads to the identification of quality measures which can ensure that the goals of the joint programme are met. The process has to be combined with mechanisms that guarantee the regular quality check.

As a first step, partners have to develop an understanding of the quality strategies applied by partners. As a second step, partners have to negotiate their varying quality perspectives. This is a process which combines quality strategies, accepts characteristics of the partner and finally agrees on a common strategy to be applied to the common project of a joint programme. On the one hand, the outcome of this process is a set of joint quality assurance processes which does not contradict the procedures existent at respective institutions. On the other hand, though, the output of the process as well as the process itself is more than a set of rules and procedures. The process of combination, acceptance and agreement in itself is witness of an emergent cooperative quality culture which can be subsequently promoted by following the outcomes of that negotiation process.

Phase 2: Consolidation. Establishment of routine procedures for quality assurance

The consolidation phase goes hand-in-hand with the set-up and concrete implementation of quality assurance procedures best suited for each programme. Basically, the issue at stake during the consolidation phase is the monitoring of the implementation of procedures and understandings that were agreed upon in the set-up phase. A routine should be established regarding following issues:

𝕝 *Application and student selection*

Information on actual practice has to be communicated between the partners. Procedures also have to be established on how to act in respect of problematic cases. Likewise, transparent information has to be available to prospective students who want to apply for the joint programme. Regular feedback on deficits of the students has to be collected and discussed between the partners. Based on this feedback, the process of application and student selection has to be improved continuously.

𝕝 *Recognition*

Comparison of courses is the basis of mutual recognition of student performance and, as such, is one of the key issues to be established in the set-up phase. The actual procedures and regulation in relation to recognition have to be established and implemented in the consolidation phase. This refers, for example, to regulations of how to agree on study plans and workload for students. Application of a Credit Transfer System is strongly recommended as they can systematise comparisons of academic achievements and facilitate recognition.

𝕝 *Mobility*

Agreement has to be established about the study periods to be spent at a partner institution and how the students are selected for a stay with respective partner institutions (assuming that not all students can go to the partner institution of their choice). This issue includes monitoring direction of mobility: partners should strive for a balanced number of mobile students coming from and going to respective partner institutions. Crucial for the successful performance of the students during the mobility phase is the establishment of adequate counselling services. These should be comparable at the respective partner institutions and students have to receive clear information on where to turn in case problems arise.

𝕝 *Responsibilities*

Responsibilities have to be clearly defined. This refers to tasks in the organisation of the joint programme on inter-institutional level, but also on internal organisation at each institution. The consolidation phase shows how well the distribution of responsibilities works and where it needs adjusting.

𝕝 *Evaluation*

Even though quality cultures of the partners might be different, evaluation of teaching and procedures should be going on at all partner institutions. The results of these evaluations have to be communicated and discussed between the partners. By cooperating in this mutual comparison quality will be improved in the fields of teaching as well as organisation and procedures.

Key factors for assuring the high quality of a joint programme are transparency and effective communication. Therefore, guidelines for procedures and organisation should be defined and should include regulations on regular up-dates on the current practice at the partner institutions.

Phase 3: Maintenance state. Routine of a common quality culture

Table 1 summarises the quality measures and indicators for quality according to the goals set for a joint programme. The quality measures described here have to be established as routine for a successful joint programme since the relationship between goals – indicators – measures form the core of the common quality culture of a joint programme.

The implementation of quality measures and their monitoring through indicators have to go hand-in-hand with a method of quality assurance that provides for regular evaluation and review. It is important that the review procedures are formalised and have a clear reporting line within the partner institutions.

Goals	Indicators	Quality measures
Attract appropriate students	Numbers of applicants and students 'Quality' of applicants, new students, and graduates	Regular and formal evaluation and improvement of information policy towards prospective students Surveys on student satisfaction and motivation
Increased reputation of institution	Increasing number of applicants Ability to raise funds	Information to internal or external media
High-quality education and service	Marks of students Low drop-out rates Short study duration Student satisfaction	Human Resource development offered to staff Surveys on student satisfaction
High quality graduates	Student accomplishments Employability Additional competences of students developed due to speciality of joint programme	Tracer studies Marketing of students to industry Survey on industry's expectations
Extension of alliances of institutions of higher education	Number of international projects Overall financial volume of international projects	Evaluation of international activities
International alumni activities	Number of active alumni Results of alumni activity	Alumni surveys Subscription of alumni to offers of former institution
To share resources	Financial reports	Monitor economic benefit of co-operation
Innovation	Novelty of programme Special accomplishments Positive feedback from industry and other stakeholders	Monitor accomplishments and feedback
Human resource development	New competences earned (e.g. language skills, intercultural competences)	Human resource development offers Monitor specific needs of staff for competence development
To share experience	Increase in co-operation on different levels	Guidelines etc. developed

Table 1. Quality measures and indicators for joint programmes according to goals

Synthesis and project results

There seems to be no standard definition for quality in joint programmes. A set of procedures for the establishment and implementation of internal quality culture for joint programmes has been presented. This article is to be understood as collection of proposals and guidelines that have to be adapted to the specific circumstances of each joint programme and the partners involved. In fact, a pre-condition for the successful establishment of a joint programme is to be ready to accept diversity as strength of universities and understand joint programmes as highlights instead of seeing it as burden which only complicates co-operation. Nevertheless, our understanding of a common quality culture for joint programmes starts with an observation of what partners in such a joint venture have to have in common: the willingness to establish a joint programme with a common set of agreed goals. As described above, the interdependency between goals, indicators, and quality measures resulting from this agreement is the core of a common quality culture for joint programmes and can be summarised in the formula:

Goals   →   Indicators   →   Quality measures

According to that formula, quality culture can be seen as common goals leading to indicators of success which verify the achievements of the goals. The definition of indicators, in turn, leads to the identification of quality measures which can ensure that the goals of the joint programme are met. The process has to be combined with mechanisms that guarantee regular quality monitoring. The recommendation, therefore, is to start working on joint programmes by applying the above quoted formula. Only success, verified against indicators and based on the quality culture of the partners, will justify the high costs of establishing and running joint programmes and strengthen their future development.

4. STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN QUALITY PROCESSES

Student involvement in university life and quality processes
Results of thematic audit on student involvement in university governance and decision-making[1]

Andy Gibbs and Christina Ashton[2]

Students are an integral and vital part of the life of all Universities and, at Napier University, their contributions to the quality of learning and teaching is recognised and actively encouraged. Audits of the quality processes are held each year under the auspices of the University Quality Committee, to whom responsibility for quality matters is devolved by the Academic Board. In 2005/06 the audits selected were student involvement in University governance and decision-making and the operation of the Boards of Examiners. This paper outlines the results of the first of these thematic audits where a small team of academics, administrative staff and students investigated how the University promotes and encourages the involvement of students in the governance and decision-making processes of the University.

The topic was chosen as a result of other work being done in the Scottish higher education sector. Over the last five years or so, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in Scotland have been undertaking a national programme of enhancement themes, aimed at developing and sharing good practice in learning and teaching in higher education. In addition, the QAA have being trying to develop a greater voice for students in institutional quality systems by supporting a national development service known as SPARQS (Student participation in quality Scotland)[3]. One of the enhancement themes was entitled 'Responding to Students' Needs' and the development team reported in 2005[4] that, while student evaluation of learning and teaching is widespread and well embedded, student evaluation in the area of quality enhancement is neither widespread nor systematic. It is against this background of national activity that the Napier audit was conceived and implemented.

Student representation at Napier University

In common with other Scottish Universities, all Napier students are members of their student association, Napier Students' Association or NSA. NSA exists to 'promote and support the well-being of its members' by, inter alia, representing 'the needs of Napier students within the University and within the wider community', including regular communication with the University.[5] The NSA raises awareness of a wide range of issues among the student body and encourages debate on these, including quality assurance issues and enhancement.

NSA is run by a small group of sabbatical officers, elected annually by the student body to represent them at the highest levels of decision-making. The sabbatical officers are salaried employees of NSA and are supported in their roles by a small number of full-time permanent employees.

As well as the NSA sabbatical officers, there is student representation at Faculty and programme level. Faculty representatives are elected to sit on Faculty committees although they are also members of some of the University bodies. Programme representatives are elected by the students from each year of each programme to represent their interests at the Programme Board of Studies. Faculty and programme representatives are not salaried and, as a rule, do not receive payment for their attendance or involvement in the decision-making processes[6].

---

1 The original audit report on which this paper is based was the combined efforts of an audit team comprising: Christina Ashton (convenor), Andy Gibbs, Sarah Snell (NSA), Dr Katrina Castle, Sally Smith, Jill Leggatt, Margaret Mill, Veronique Johnston, Emily Alder, Dr Monika Foster and Victoria Heathwood. Their contributions are gratefully and fully acknowledged.

2 Andy Gibbs, Director of International Relations of Napier University, Edinburgh, United Kingdom; Christina Ashton, Head of Centre for Law at Napier University, Edinburgh, United Kingdom.

3 http://www.sparqs.org.uk.

4 Report at: http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/uploads/documents/Student_Needs_Full_Outcomes_FINAL29_6_05.pdf.

5 http://www.dcs.napier.ac.uk/~nsa/constitution.pdf.

6 This situation is currently being reviewed by the University and will be discussed later.

Programme representatives are offered training in their role each November through NSA training sessions. This usually attracts around half of the 500 programme representatives and is generally seen to be very effective. In addition, programme representatives can take a credit-bearing elective module 'Communication Skills for Programme Representatives.' This module considers the concept of representation, the role of student representation in higher education, methods of gathering student views, ways of ensuring effective communication, providing feedback to staff and students through oral and written media, organising meetings, working with others and decision making in higher education.

Committee Structure for Napier University 2005/06.
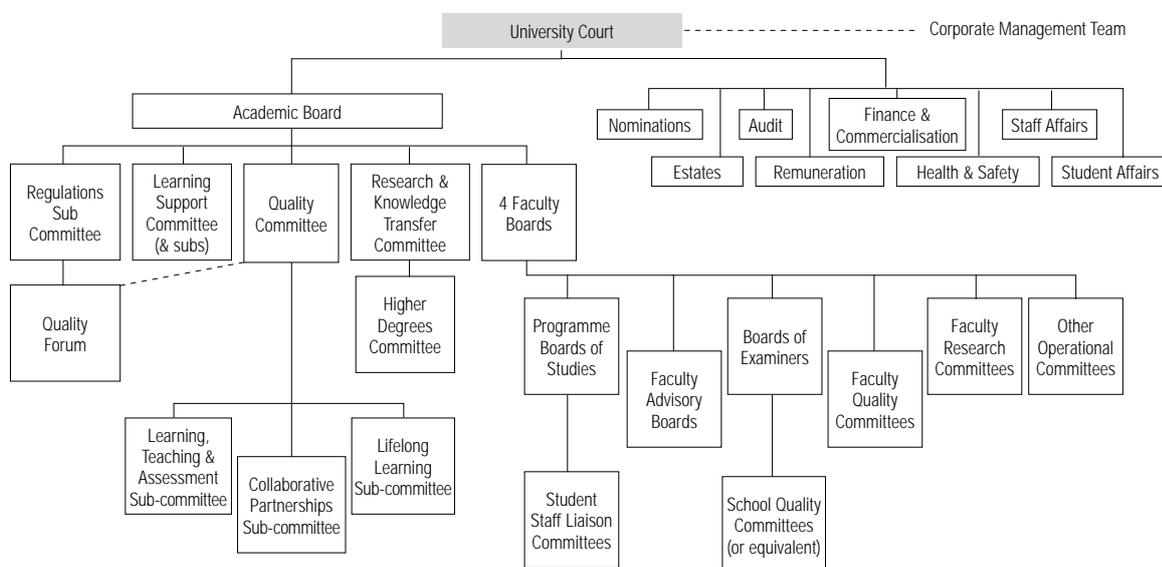
Methodology used by the audit

The audit team comprised five academic members, five administrative staff involved directly with students and one sabbatical member of NSA. [7] The audit used three main methods of gathering evidence of the effectiveness of the University's systems for involving students. These were:
1. a review of student representation on committees at University-level;
2. a questionnaire directed at programme teams to investigate the involvement of programme representatives in the programme's management; and
3. a focus group with NSA sabbaticals and programme representatives.

The varied methodologies allowed the audit team to triangulate the results to ensure their accuracy. The review of committees, for instance, was a two-stage process with a questionnaire being sent to all committee secretaries, followed by a scrutiny of committee minutes to verify and expand on the questionnaire findings.

Programme teams were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding the involvement of students on the Student/Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) and the Programme Board of Studies. Questions also asked for feedback on the programme and module evaluation reports considered annually. The programmes reviewed were nominated by Heads of Schools and included both undergraduate and taught post-graduate programmes. There was a very high response rate from the programme teams, thus enabling a broader and deeper evaluation of the systems in place.

7 The audit was conducted over a period of five months and the final report was presented to the University Quality Committee in May 2006, with that Committee endorsing and supporting most of the recommendations in the Report.

The third method of collecting information for the audit was a focus group of student representatives. The group's discussions were recorded on audio tape and later transcribed for analysis and evaluation. Although there was a small number of participants, the audit team found the directness of the comments helped to verify some of the findings of the other methodologies.

Outcomes of the audit

The audit identified a number of areas of good practice and made a number of recommendations to the University to develop and enhance the involvement of students in the governance of the University.

1. Committee attendance
As was expected, attendance at University level committees by NSA sabbatical officers was very good. These committees tended to be the larger policy-making committees of the University such as the Academic Board, Quality Committee and Student Affairs Committee. Their meetings are generally held during office hours with a high attendance from academic and administrative staff. However, where the membership of committees included Faculty representatives alone, the attendance of the student representatives was less. There were various reasons for these differences. Faculty representatives had classes to attend or their part-time employment and accordingly they could not always attend meetings during office hours. Sabbatical officers are salaried and have access to NSA transport whereas Faculty representatives might not be able to access transport easily. Finally, it was noted that attendance by student representatives was less where the agenda's subject matter was perceived to be of less importance to the students. An anomaly however arose from the results for the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee which had very low attendance by sabbatical and Faculty representatives but is arguably one of the most important of the University committees.

2. Student participation at university level committees
Student attendance is not the same as student engagement. The team set out to ascertain the actual involvement of students in the proceedings of the committees by analysing the agendas and minutes of the committees and asking committee convenors and secretaries for their perception of whether students actively participated in the committee's work. Overall it was found that where student representatives attended meetings, there was evidence that they participated in the committee's work. However it was difficult to check the exact level of participation because the 'house style' for minutes of committees within the University does not normally identify individual contributions to the discussions.

Some committee agendas showed a student report as a standing item and there was also evidence of students being assigned actions from the previous meeting. Where students made comments during the meeting, these matters were followed up at the next meeting, indicating a willingness on the part of committees to listen to the opinions of students and a similar willingness on the part of students to engage with the work of the committee.

The audit team also asked committee secretaries to rate the overall effectiveness of the student participation. As a 'reality' check, members of the audit team analysed the minutes of the committees and rated the effectiveness using the same criteria. Committee secretaries generally rated the student involvement as 'valued and valuable,' a higher rating than audit team members. This is understandable, given that the audit team were not present in meetings and therefore their perceptions were drawn from the written minutes which we have already established are given a highly stylised form.

However, although the overall picture is a good one, around one-quarter of the committees reported that the students' participation and thus the engagement with the other committee members and its work were poor. Most of the committees affected were at Faculty level, where Faculty representatives only were expected to attend. This is problematic since many issues about programmes, facilities and resources are

raised and discussed at these Boards. If student representatives are not attending these, then the student voice is not being heard by the people who will make decisions that directly affect students. The University is currently reviewing the operation of Faculty Boards to try to clarify what changes are required to encourage better participation by students and academics alike.

3. Programme representatives
Each programme in the University seeks to involve its student body in the management of the programme by facilitating the election at least two representatives from each cohort to sit on the Programme Board of Studies and SSLC.

The audit team found that the number of student representatives on a programme varied considerably from none to twenty-eight, depending on the programme size and structure[8]. Of obvious concern was the fact that some programmes had no student representatives at all. Two main reasons for this were insufficient volunteers and the non-attendance at University of students on flexible or distance learning programmes.

SSLC meetings were usually held three times per year a week or so before a Board of Studies meeting. These SSLC meetings are invariably minuted, usually by School administrative staff or an academic but in a few cases by students. The minutes of the SSLC are often standing agenda items for the Board of Studies so that concerns raised by students are brought directly to the attention of the programme team. Attendance by students at SSLC and Boards of Studies was generally good.

As part of the quality assurance and enhancement processes used by the University, Schools and programmes are reviewed by internal and external peers on a five-year cycle. The review teams are required to take into account the views of students on the programme or in the School. The students participating are drawn from the general student body and are not necessarily student representatives. The audit team questioned whether students would be selected because the programme team knew that they would give a good account of the School or programme. However, no evidence was found to suggest that such careful selection had occurred or that students were 'rehearsed' in what they should say to the review team. Indeed some staff pointed out that this would be unethical. Briefing sessions on the purpose of the review were held by a large number of programme teams so that the students would be more comfortable and less worried by the process. It was noted however that these briefing sessions were held just before the review and there was little earlier involvement by students in the preparatory work for the review.

One of the reasons for having SSLC and Programme Boards of Studies is to gain feedback from students on how their programmes are working. Students are also asked to give feedback on the operation of the modules they have undertaken and this information is collected and used in the formal module evaluation reports completed by module leaders each year, which in turn informs the programme's annual report. Module questionnaires are the usual method of collecting feedback and these are made available to the students in a variety of ways – in class, on-line via WebCT, online by email, in module handbooks or from administrative staff. Most programmes used more than one method of distribution. Although most questionnaires are collected at the end of the module, an example of good practice was seen to be the distribution of a questionnaire mid-trimester, so that any problems could quickly be resolved for that cohort of students rather than just for the next.

Programme teams referred to other methods of collecting information from their students with regard to the programme or individual modules. The most often used method was informal discussion in class but other methods utilised were year group meetings, email, programme questionnaires, WebCT discussion boards and focus groups. Informal collection was cited as the most effective method by academics and by the student focus group that formed part of this study.

---

8 Where the student cohort is very large more than 2 representatives will be elected; normally one representative is elected for every 30 students.

The questionnaire to programme teams was more extensive than for committee secretaries and the audit team were able to gain much more information from those who worked with students on a daily basis. Four out of five programme teams felt that the wider student body benefited when they were able to participate in the management of the programme. Other benefits were:

- Regular feedback on the programme and student experience;
- Enhanced student experience of learning and teaching;
- Students had a sense of ownership when they were involved in the management of the programme;
- Students had opportunities for developing transferable skills and social opportunities.

Outcomes of the Student Focus Group

There were three main outcomes of this group's discussion. First the system of student representation is important and valued by the students, secondly it generally works well and thirdly NSA is recognised in Scotland as promulgating good practice. The group also felt that the University had a genuine commitment to students being involved in the University's decision-making processes but this commitment was probably not obvious to students who are not involved in representation.

There was a recognition that the representation system worked well because there was a sense of mutual respect, and that both academic staff and students were willing to engage with the process.

Evidence of good practice from the audit

1. The University has developed a culture of involving students in governance and decision-making at all levels of the University. Students, whether NSA sabbatical officers or other representatives, are routinely included in the membership of committees, except where the subject matter of the committee clearly excludes their participation. For instance, students are not represented on Programme Boards of Examiners or on University committees concerned with staff issues such as the Staff Affairs Committee and Remuneration Committee. However, it was also noted that students are invited to participate on short-term working parties such as the audit team itself.

2. The University has a growing number of students on distance or flexible learning programmes and their involvement in the University's governance processes has long been a difficult and almost insurmountable problem. Students on these types of programmes cannot be expected to attend meetings when they do not normally attend the University's premises for classes. Yet they all have the right to be included in discussions about the programme and to be able to give their views. The audit noted two innovative examples of good practice here. The first programme, a distance learning programme with students from all over the UK, appointed a member of the academic staff not involved in teaching on the programme to act as an 'assessor' to the student body. The students related their concerns to the assessor who brought these to the attention of the Board of Studies. The assessor would then feedback to the students the results of the Board's discussions. In this way, contact was maintained with the students and they could then feel more involved with the programme team. The second programme had cohorts and staff based in Glasgow and Edinburgh. It was not practicable to bring these people physically together in one place but the use of video conferencing has had the same effect by allowing simultaneous discussion and resolution of issues raised.

3. The University invites students to be involved in the review of programmes and in the review of the provision by Schools. Students are likely to be apprehensive about the process and worried that they might say something that will adversely affect their programme or School. In these circumstances, it is the responsibility of the academic staff to prepare the students for the review meeting by explaining the format and purpose of the review. If the students are well briefed on what the review is intended to address, they will be better able to engage with the review panel.

4. Academic staff have developed methods of seeking the students' views on modules and programmes beyond the normal paper questionnaire. Email and on-line methods are used extensively and the use of focus groups appears to be gaining popularity. However, informal methods of collection of feedback, such as discussion in class, appear to be the most effective and are welcomed by students. The mid-trimester questionnaire is also innovative in that it allows the changes brought by the questionnaire results to be experienced by current students. These students can also feedback on the changes so that further action can be taken for the following cohorts.

The recommendations of the audit

The audit team made a number of recommendations, including:

1. The findings of the report should be disseminated as an example of good practice in line with the Bologna Agreement action line to involve students in University governance and decision-making. This paper is part of that dissemination process.

2. Committees of the University should review their methods of working with regard to the timing of meetings and the strategic placing of items of interest to students on the agenda to allow them to leave early if the business does not affect them.

3. The University should consider whether some form of honorarium or out-of-pocket expenses could be made to assist student representatives to attend meetings. This is currently under consideration by the University.

4. It was recommended that the convenors or secretaries of committees meet with new student representatives before their first meeting to explain how the committee works.

5. Although student concerns were often raised informally and thus resolved quickly, there was no record of these issues or the action taken. It was recommended that the minutes of SSLC meetings might record these issues.

6. Feedback to students on decisions needed to be strengthened and formalised. The use of email, WebCT pages, School web pages and verbal feedback at lectures should assist in this.

7. The existence of the credit-bearing module on student representation is not widely known within the Napier academic and student community. The audit report recommends that further work be done in this regard with perhaps staff development sessions being held to raise awareness of the importance of student participation and representation.

Conclusion

In this paper we have tried to describe and discuss how student participation at Napier University works and how the university benefits from encouraging our students to be involved in the decision-making processes. The audit report highlighted that the University has a strong culture of student representation and that the NSA is recognised nationally as having promulgated good practice in student representation.

There is a saying that 'from small acorns, great oaks grow.' Some of the examples of good practice highlighted by this paper may appear to be small, even insignificant, but taken together they show the commitment of the University and its staff and students to be involved and work together. The recommendations of the thematic audit reflect the awareness of the University that there is always room for improvement and the fact that these have either been accepted by the Quality Committee or are currently being addressed shows that there is an awareness of the need to further enhance the quality of the University's systems of student representation.

Student participation in QA: strengths and challenges

Sanja Brus, Janja Komljenovič, Daithí Mac Síthigh, Geert Noope and Colin Tück[1]

Introduction

Student participation in quality assurance has become widely recognised in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Ministers declared 2001 in Prague that students are important stakeholders on all levels and reaffirmed the importance of student participation in the 'European standards and guidelines on quality assurance'. However, the reasons for student participation in quality assurance (QA), and how and on which levels students should be involved, is not fully understood yet by all actors in all countries.

Higher education plays an important role in our societies. It educates students for work or for academic and research performance. Yet, this is not its only role. It also represents the cornerstone for the democratisation, growth and wellbeing of our societies. These main roles and functions can be seen as consensus amongst all stakeholders in the EHEA. It is widely recognised that the inclusion of all stakeholders in creation of the EHEA and the governance of higher education institutions (HEI) improves European HE. All have their own experiences and their own views with different interests, wishes and obstacles. The possible contribution of students to quality is often forgotten and neglected. Although the contribution of students can be valuable in numerous areas, such as:

- the compatibility of the student workload with the ECTS credits;
- the attractiveness and efficiency of teaching methods;
- do the written learning outcomes fit the competences actually gained;
- accessibility of study accessories;
- financial implications of studies;
- ideas for teaching and learning improvements;
- ideas based on contacts with foreign students;
- mobility obstacles;
- obstacles for multidisciplinarity of studies;
- the fitness of methods and criteria for student evaluation;
- student involvement in the governance of HEIs;
- accessibility of professors and academic staff.

Many more could be mentioned but these should serve to highlight the benefits that the students' contribution can bring.

However, involving students in the quality culture of the institution can prove helpful too. Quality culture means the whole HEI – i.e. every student, professor, assistant and administrative staff – striving together for a higher quality. Students will not be able to contribute if they are ignored or even penalised for providing information, making comments or initiating appeals. The concept of a quality culture and a full support of quality assurance measures require students to be accepted as full and equal partners.

Theory and practice however are still worlds apart as the 2005 Bologna scorecard showed. The obstacles to student participation in quality assurance at the different levels have to be dealt with. The parallel session at the Quality Assurance Forum aimed at providing examples from various backgrounds, in order to identify best practices and common problems, and to give an opportunity to learn from each other.

---

1 Sanja Brus, member of the Bologna Process Committee, ESIB; Janja Komljenovič, member of the Executive Committee, ESIB; Daithí Mac Síthigh, member of the Bologna Process Committee, ESIB; Geert Noope, Officer for Educational Affairs, VSS – The National Union of Students in Flanders; Colin Tück, member of the Bologna Process Committee, ESIB.

The session selected four contributions from Belgium (Flanders), Germany, Ireland and Slovenia that each shed a different light on the success of student participation in QA. All contributions were written by students, representing a variety of backgrounds, each with specific problems and solutions.

For practical reasons, this documentation is limited to the two cases which focus on the recruitment of student peers in external QA.

Case 1: Belgium (Flanders)

Quality assurance in Flanders
On the level of internal quality assurance, the institutions are obliged to evaluate the quality of their education permanently and on their own initiative. It is compulsory to involve students in this. The institutions are completely free in the way they organise this critical self-reflection leading to a 'self-evaluation-report'.

The external evaluation of a field of study is jointly organised via the umbrella-organisations for institutions, the Flemish association of universities (Vlir) and the Council of Flemish university colleges/polytechnics (Vlhora). Vlir and Vlhora are responsible for the organisation and coordination of the whole process. External quality assurance review panels consist of teachers, experts and specialists in a certain field of study. For a few years now, it has also become an obligation to involve a student as a member of this panel (see below). This panel evaluates the quality of the education in a certain field of study at the different institutions by studying preparation documents, such as the report of the internal review panel, and by a site-visit of a few days, including interviews with all stakeholders (teaching staff, students, graduates…). This is done every 8 years for each field of study. The result is an 'external evaluation report', a collection of conclusions and recommendations.

Flanders works together with the Netherlands in 'the Dutch-Flemish accreditation agency' NVAO, a semi-governmental institution. The agency judges, based on the 'external evaluation report', whether the field of study at the institution reviewed complies at least with the minimum quality standards. If this is the case, the institution gets the permission to hand out degrees.

Students in the external review panel
Students play the most important role in the second stage, as members of the external review panels and this paper focuses on this aspect.

Background information
Flanders already has a system of external review. Since the 'Bologna Decree' (2003), the involvement of one student is obligatory. The student has to be enrolled at one of the institutions where the field of study is organised. VVS – The National Union of Students in Flanders – lobbied a lot to have this legal guarantee in the decree. The minister of education and the other stakeholders – regardless of the resistance from a few rectors – agreed with this obligation.

Role of the student
The student is a fully-fledged member of the review panel, which means he/she has the same rights and obligations as the other members. Like the others, the student also receives a daily allowance, which in practice is similar to a well-paid student-job.

Method of work
VVS is responsible for seeking out and selecting the students for the external review panels. The general assembly of VVS elects a selection panel consisting of 10 members from universities and polytechnics. To recruit a review panel member, the vacancy is widely advertised (the local student councils, the institutions, student press …). On the basis of a CV and a motivation letter, a first selection is done. The short-listed students

are invited for an interview with the panel. For every field of study, two effective students-members and a few reserve candidates are selected. The names are passed to the coordinating organisations, Vlir and Vlhora.

Independence of candidates

The role of VVS ends here. Further communication, the training, the briefing and the payment of the students are tasks of Vlir and Vlhora. This is to ensure the independence of the panel members. In order to protect the authority of the panel, no member can have any connection with one of the visited institutions or any potentially 'biased' organisation. This means that students cannot visit their own institution; instead a second student from another institution is needed. Also VVS is excluded from the actual visit and evaluation. VVS may not have any influence on what the student stresses in the panel, can not access the preparation documents, and has no influence on the final report. A few rectors were afraid that otherwise VVS would 'put forward its vision on education' through the review panel. For that reason the student-members may not be linked to VVS.

First experiences

VVS began with the process of searching and selecting candidates in early 2005 and in May 2006 has concluded this process for the 4th time. In general, the selection system is working and for certain fields of study enough competent students are found. However, certain problems have to be systematically dealt with: for certain fields of study it is nearly impossible to find enough candidates! This has even led to situations where there were no students on the external panel. This is unfortunate, since VVS has been actively lobbying for student participation in QA for a long time. It seems impossible to select a single individual from thousands of potential candidates, even though the position in the panel is a paid one. This has an impact on the quality of the selected candidates: fewer candidates mean less competition and fewer possibilities to weed out incompetent candidates.

a. Type of degree

Enough candidates are found for fields of study taking place at universities. The response from fields of study with a 'social touch' (for example pedagogy), bigger fields of study and fields of study where student participation is traditionally strong, is higher. In several fields of study at polytechnics, such as nursing, midwifery, primary school teachers or office management, almost no candidates were found. Even after trying 'new methods' ('stalking' with e-mails, telephone calls with student representatives, using your network of friends) the response rate remained low. How to explain this gap between universities and polytechnics?

A first possible reason is the higher regular workload throughout the year for polytechnic students. Whilst the main workload for university students is limited to the end of the semester, polytechnic students often have attendance requirements in class and are expected to contribute actively throughout the year. On top of that, polytechnics require internships from their students, in some fields of study even every year. In nearly all fields the last year consists of a considerable part of internships. Hence, polytechnic students tell VVS that they are interested in participating in external review panels, but fear they may not be able to handle the workload and to be absent from class, even though this absence is justified. In some case the parents discourage the student from participating in external reviews and tell them to concentrate on their studies. The planning of the external review panel takes into account the duties of the student, but long periods of internships are, however, difficult to include.

Secondly a polytechnic degree is generally shorter than a university degree. A professional bachelor degree consists of 180 ECTS, whereas an education up to a master is usually 240-300 ECTS. During the first year the students still hesitate to take up certain commitments and during the last year the internship takes up most of their time. Only the second year remains for those who want to apply. However, it is during their first year that students need to express their interest in the external review panel, even though they have no idea whether they will succeed or continue in their field of study. This poses a serious barrier in comparison to university students who have a longer phase between the beginning and the end.

Thirdly student participation and representation is less elaborate at polytechnics. There is not the same kind of tradition as at universities. The same holds true for quality assurance. It is often the case that polytechnic students have not heard of such a system before they read about it in the job advertisement for the panel. On top of that, it can be feared that not all polytechnics are willing to motivate their students or to let them be active at the national level.

For all of these reasons, the participation barrier for polytechnic students is considerably higher. VVS does not doubt the principle of participation in QA for this group remaining an absolute necessity. On the contrary, it strengthens VVS' commitment to further stimulate the participation of this group.

b. Motivating students with a non-sexy topic

The audience VVS aims at with the external review panels is very broad, going far beyond student representatives. VVS aims to reach the average student, also from institutions or fields of study where student councils hardly exist. As VVS represents student councils of universities and polytechnics, it is therefore less relevant for the average student. This poses the question whether the right students are reached and the right channels used.

The distribution of the advertisement and the motivation of students rely on local institutions, members of their boards, quality assurance coordinators or motivated teachers/professors and on student councils at different levels. Whilst at some institutions the dissemination of information runs smoothly, other institutions are not willing to cooperate. The situation is worse at faculties/departments where student councils hardly exist. It is difficult to stimulate student participation in QA when it is already difficult to organise student participation in general.

National student councils for each field of study (e.g. biology students) could be very useful in attracting students for external review panels, but unfortunately do not exist.

Quality assurance is not a sexy topic for the average student. Translating the message and the topic into a language that appeals to students is a challenge that should not be underestimated.

c. Organisational matters

In the past VVS underestimated the workload of students. After two years of experience it becomes clear that VVS needs to invest a lot of time and energy in this project. This has come on top of all other issues VVS deals with, without additional funding. Funding possibilities to cover the secretarial work have to be explored. One possible option is to slightly 'tax' the wage of each student in the external review panel.

Conclusion

Selecting students for external review panels is not always easy and VVS even considered 'outsourcing' this task. Fortunately VVS received positive feedback from the university and polytechnics rector's councils that have noticed an improvement in the quality of the selected students. The students are assertive, motivated and their perspective on things brings an added value to the panel. VVS will continue the hard work to attract more, qualified students.

Case 2: Germany

The German system of external quality assurance

Along with the introduction of Bachelor and Master programmes into German Federal Higher Education Law the call for more flexibility in designing and carrying out study programmes arose. Several actors deemed the traditional system of 'directives'[2] as inflexible and inappropriate. This led to a decision by the Standing Conference of Ministers in Charge of Education and Culture of the German Länder (KMK) in late 1998 to establish a system of Accreditation of study programmes.

2 Framework curricula were laid down for each subject area in directives on federal level.

The Accreditation Council was set up as a 'meta accreditation body' of the new system and a system of Accreditation Agencies, which carry out peer reviews of study programmes and take accreditation decisions, emerged. The prerequisite for an Agency to be allowed to operate is accreditation of the Agency by the Council. Agencies have to comply with certain requirements for their procedures, e.g. regarding decision-making bodies and composition of peer groups. Peers judgements on the content of study programmes are independent.

Provisions for student participation
The Accreditation Council is composed of four representatives of higher education institutions, four representatives of Länder governments, five representatives of the labour market, two foreign experts and two student representatives. In addition, one representative of Accreditation Agencies participates on a consultative basis.

Accreditation Agencies need to set up a decision-making body which takes all final accreditation decisions. These bodies decide on the basis of a report and a recommendation by the peer group. In their decision-making bodies, the Agencies have to foresee student representatives as members with full voting rights.

Regarding the composition of peer groups carrying out site visits of study programmes, the Agencies are obliged to involve all relevant stakeholders, including at least academia, students and the labour market. There are no detailed provisions on the composition of peer groups in terms of numbers or percentages. It has, however, developed as common practice that peer groups consist of 3 professors, 1 labour market representative and 1 student.

The Student Accreditation Pool
1. History and development
   Besides these formal provisions for student involvement, the procedures for how students become members of the Council, a decision-making body or a peer group are a crucial cornerstone. Whereas the members of the Council are jointly appointed by the Rectors' Conference (HRK) and KMK, the recruiting and appointment of members of the decision-making bodies and peer groups is the competence of the Agencies themselves.

   In the beginning of the system, two requirements became broad agreement of student organisations at national level:

   Firstly, students acting as members of the Council, as members of the Agencies' bodies or as peers have to be legitimated in some way as they are student representatives. Student organisations rejected the idea of students being only experts and not representatives. Secondly, students acting in any of the above-mentioned functions have to be sufficiently qualified and posses the necessary experience.

   To meet this requirement, the National Union of Students in Germany (fzs), the regional associations of student unions and the federal associations of faculty student unions, with due support from the student organisations affiliated with the political parties, decided in August 2000 to set up a shared Student Accreditation Pool of students meeting the requirements.

   The Council supported the commitment of students and recommended to all Agencies to recruit students for their peer groups and decision-making bodies from the Student Accreditation Pool, as soon as it is smoothly working.

2. Structure

The Student Accreditation Pool holds a General Assembly twice a year, gathering all the supporting organisations mentioned above. It provides a possibility for many students dealing with higher education policy on different levels to discuss recent developments in the Accreditation System and to exchange their views and experience. The delegation of students to the Council is usually decided by the General Assembly.

A Secretariat is hosted by the National Union of Students in Germany (fzs) to carry out the administrative duties. A Coordination Board supports the Secretariat and takes necessary decisions between the General Assemblies.

3. Delegation of student peers

The founding members (see above) delegate individuals into the Pool. As a request by an Accreditation Agency to nominate a student peer reaches the Secretariat, it finds those students matching the requested profile (subject, type of institution, federal region) and nominates one of those being available on a random basis.

In case a student member of any decision-making body is to be nominated, the Secretariat issues a call amongst all members of the Pool and either the Coordination Board or the General Assembly selects the new member(s) of that body.

4. Training of student peers

To meet the requirement of sufficiently qualified student peers and representatives the Pool offers regular week-end training seminars which are open to all interested students. The training seminars acquaint participants with the necessary knowledge on curricular reforms, the Bologna Process and the procedures of the Accreditation System. Facilitated by interactive methods, participants get a more practical knowledge on content and procedures of peer group work.

The delegation of individuals into the Pool is an entirely autonomous decision of the organisations mentioned above and there is no formal requirement to attend a training seminar before being eligible. Nevertheless the Pool strongly recommends to the delegating organisations that delegated students should attend a training seminar.

Most delegating organisations, including the National Union of Students in Germany (fzs), decided to only delegate individuals after they passed a training seminar or gained a comparable degree of knowledge some another way.

Challenges ahead

Even six years after its foundation the Pool is not able to fulfil all requests from Accreditation Agencies adequately. The number of students from universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen) in the Pool is comparatively low. Also several subject areas are only weakly represented.

The reasons for that are manifold. The federal associations of faculty student unions represent a major source from which the Pool draws its members. However, in many subject areas these are only weakly organised or do not exist at all. New subjects, especially, often lack representation at federal level. The representation of students of universities of applied sciences is a general problem at federal level.

The financial situation of the Pool is not well developed. Since it does not draw any fees from the supporting organisations nor receive administrative grants, the Pool relies on funding for each individual project. Only the funding of the fzs-hosted Secretariat is generally secured. This seriously limits the possibilities of PR activities and campaigns to promote participation of students in Accreditation amongst the higher education community and amongst students themselves.

5. IMPACT OF QUALITY PROCESSES

Impact of quality processes

Bjørn Stensaker[1]

Introduction

Quality assurance is slowly but steadily becoming an integrated part of higher education. From being a novelty a couple of decades ago with much emphasis on how to design and set up quality assurance systems and procedures (Neave 1988), we then witnessed more interests in methodological issues before our attention was more drawn to the human factor (Neave 1996); how interest in quality may be stimulated by leadership, and the ways to stimulate staff and student involvement and ownership (Brennan & Shah 2000). Currently, more and more governments, quality assurance agencies, but also higher education institutions are held accountable with respect to the impact of all this (see Stensaker 2003; Westerheijden et al 2006). Those familiar with the field of quality assurance would perhaps argue that the accountability dimension is far from new – it has been present for decades (Schwarz & Westerheijden 2004). While this is correct, one should nevertheless notice that accountability these days means something different than in the past. While accountability has usually been associated with whether quality assurance systems and procedures are developed and in existence, the question of the impact and effects related to this activity is still asked. This is perhaps the best sign of a maturing field. If one studies how management ideas are spread in organisations in general, one can see the development of quality assurance matches many of the typical characteristics of such ideas (Stensaker 2007a).

For those involved in or working with quality assurance, this change represents a challenge in that it may mark the end of an era associated with enthusiasm and the beginning of an era more characterised by realism in the field. While quality in the past were seen as the dominant organisational variable for higher education (Cameron & Whetten 1996), discussions about quality these days are often more related to ´downsizing´ issues, linking quality to more targeted strategic priorities, or developing sustainable schemes (Alderman & Brown 2005). In short, we are entering an era where a more realistic understanding of what quality assurance and quality processes can or can not do is prevailing. The main reason for this is related to a growing bulk of research and more comprehensive studies of quality assurance schemes and processes improving our knowledge of the pros and cons of quality processes. In acknowledging that quality processes have many facets, the main point of this article is to outline some of the most central dimensions with respect to their impact. Perhaps understanding the effects and outcomes of quality assurance is the most appropriate medicine for how one can best make use of quality assurance in the future. Thus, the rather extensive literature list supporting this short article, is, more than anything, an invitation to go more deeply into the issues that this article can only cover more superficially due to space limitations.

Impact – a methodological problem

While there are a growing number of studies on quality assurance and quality processes – it is nevertheless not easy to argue that we have many sophisticated studies on the impact of quality assurance. The problem is first and foremost methodological. Impact suggests a causal relationship between organisational initiatives and organisational effects, a fact suggesting that impact studies should be related to specific definitions and understandings of quality. However, since we also know that quality is a relative concept (Harvey & Green 1993), we then also need to take into account that studies of impact should mirror this, with the consequence being that we need to broaden our (often rather narrow) understanding of where to look for ´impact´ (see also Kogan et al 2000).

1 Bjørn Stensaker, Programme director at NIFU STEP, Norway.

However, the consequence is that causal modelling may be even more difficult. How do we know that a certain external initiative is causing experienced internal effects (Hackman & Wageman 1995)? Quality work and quality assurance schemes are only some of the many external and internal processes and reform measures which higher education institutions continuously handle and react upon. Isolating the effects of a particular process is, therefore, difficult. A particular problem when analysing effects relates to the many purposes associated with quality assurance. Since quality assurance has many potential uses, a semantic problem occurs: one risks the possibility of relating change to quality assurance when in reality the experienced change is implemented due to other administrative or organisational measures. Thus, perhaps it is not so surprising that research has shown that ´quality´ is the most important factor affecting organisational performance in general (Reeves & Bednar 1994: 419).

Impact of quality assurance - the broad perspective

For those wanting to study impact, there is at the moment almost no alternative than to apply a broad and a more ´soft´ perspective with respect to measuring impact – almost all available studies have used this perspective (see for example, Massy 1999; Brennan & Shah 2000, Newton 2002). However, applying this perspective also enlightens us about some of the underlying conditions for obtaining impact:

▌ the close link between external quality assurance and internal change (van Vught & Westerheijden 1994)

▌ the need to balance accountability and improvement (Thune 1996)

▌ the importance of leadership and leadership involvement (Stensaker 1999)

▌ the difficulties but also the gains by involving students and staff (Newton 2002)

The twist concerning these conditions is, of course, that they can both stimulate and hinder impact. Hence, sensible external pressure, can on the one hand, create a much needed impetus for change, while, on the other, ill-designed external quality assurance processes may only create resistance and turbulence (Vroeijenstijn 1995). In practice, it is nevertheless almost impossible to find one-dimensional and ´pure´ effects of quality processes. This is perhaps the main lesson we have learned after a couple of decades of studying quality processes. And as shown below, the impacts of quality can be interpreted quite differently depending on the point of departure.

Power
Quality assurance and quality processes are heavily related to power issues (Barnett 1994). The easiest way to detect this is by studying the changes in institutional responsibility for quality issues over the past decades. The trend is rather clear – quality processes support the development of a stronger institutional leadership in higher education (Askling 1997). This can be seen by the increasing centralisation of information quality systems produce, and the much clearer lines of responsibility that most institutions develop in this area. While this may be an effect that is welcomed by some, it is seen by others as a troublesome development where responsibilities the individual academic had in the past are removed (Henkel 2000). On the other side, we can also find evidence that quality processes triggers discussions and debates about the institutional identity of universities and colleges, forcing them to re-invent themselves as organisations and re-think their missions and profiles (Stensaker 2006). And while the individual academic may have lost some power in the process, one can also see a more legitimate role for students and other stakeholders developing (Harvey & Knight 1996), triggering effects not yet overseen for the sector.

Professionalisation
Related to, but still separate from, the impact quality processes have with respect to power, is the systematisation and increased professionalisation of the work related to quality processes. Perhaps the most noticeable effect is the formalisation that has swept over so many higher education institutions in forms of written routines, scripts and rule-driven handbooks providing hints of when to do what, and the persons in charge. By some this may be seen as a sure sign of increased bureaucracy in the sector, while by others,

it is seen as a much needed visualisation of the old ´tacit knowledge´ that dominated quality assurance in the past. While there might be some truth in both perspectives, we do tend to forget that these processes might also stimulate new forms of cooperation, certainly collegial, but also between academics, administrators and students where practice with respect to teaching and learning is discussed, tested and contested (Massy 1999). And while the new systems and procedures may be intimidating and sometimes boring to handle, they also have the strange side-effect that they somehow remove the mysteries and the often felt fears surrounding quality assurance by making the whole process more predictable.

Public Relations

Interestingly, nowadays we also see new types of effects of quality assurance in higher education. The emergence of ´markets´, the ever present globalisation, and the increased competition so strongly felt by many universities and colleges have forced many institutions into a ´survival mode´ - where quality processes are used as a marketing and branding tool for articulating how they perform, what they try to do, and how they do it, to their constituencies (Stensaker 2007b). In a point of time where the sector is under pressure from various stakeholders and external forces, this is something that actually might improve the external understanding of higher education, not least by also prioritising and emphasising the teaching and learning outcomes of higher education, and not only the research and innovation aspects which tend to dominate the external image of higher educations institutions (Dill & Soo 2005). In this way, quality processes are also of assistance as a way to defend the sector against the many poorly developed, unfair or unbalanced ranking and performance indicators systems which these days sweep over the world.

Permeability

The emergence of ranking and performance indicator systems do, however, have a similarity with the more traditional quality assurance in that both processes produce information about the sector – information that makes universities and colleges more transparent and open. With respect to the information available, we probably know more about higher education than ever before (Stensaker 2003). The good thing is that this has led to more informed decision-making processes where data and information about performance, relevance and quality are used more systematically (Brennan & Shah 2000). A side effect becoming more and more visible is also that quality processes contribute to integrating various dimensions of higher education (funding, personnel information, student characteristics, etc.), visualising once again the link to power and professionalisation. In other words, quality processes are more and more intertwined with other organisational processes and are opening up the ´black box´ of higher education.

Paradoxes and prospects

The brief summary of the various dimensions where impact may be found illustrates some of the paradoxes of quality assurance: while quality assurance has, as its main purpose, to improve teaching and learning, there are surprisingly few studies available proving this link. What we have are studies indicating changes in organisation, infrastructure, attitudes and responsibilities. While there might be good reasons to believe that these factors indirectly improve teaching and learning, the whole field of quality assurance would benefit from more thorough studies providing better evidence with respect to impact (see also Westerheijden *et al* 2007).

The reason for wanting more impact studies is related to another paradox of quality assurance; the fact that the more information quality processes produce, the more information will be required, although all this information, at least so far, has not produced less pressure concerning accountability. If the sector wants to let their own voice be heard in the accountability debate, the sector need arguments, facts and evidence, and impact studies might be one area to start.

However, as indicated in the introduction, the debate on accountability is nowadays also a debate targeting the whole area of quality assurance, and it is not difficult to predict, on the basis of recent events, that there might be a need to review a number of quality assurance schemes with respect to their costs, their use of time and energy, and their importance as a driver for change (PA consulting 2000, Alderman & Brown 2005). This is yet another paradox concerning quality assurance: while the underlying logic fostering quality assurance is to rationalise, improve work processes and stimulate learning, one could argue whether these elements always have been a good description of the procedures associated with quality assurance itself. Hence, what we have seen in many countries is that quality assurance has added new procedures and routines without being able to eliminate old or irrelevant ones. Perhaps more introspection and ´self-evaluation´ will disclose the need for more fine-tuned and sustainable quality assurance schemes – more linked to the need for strategy and a sense of direction than the need for broad and comprehensive systems? In an era where accreditation and other forms of evaluation are being introduced in new contexts as yet another potential ´add on´ (Westerheijden 2001; Stensaker & Harvey 2006), this is an important issue to discuss.

The impact of quality culture on quality of teaching – a case of business higher education in Poland

Anetta Kowalkiewicz[1]

Introduction

During the last two decades, Polish higher education has undergone a serious transformation, which has resulted in increasing interest in the question of quality of teaching. Three groups of premises can be perceived as facilitators of this quality movement.

Firstly, the challenges that determine the role of higher education both in Europe, and in the world (i.e. economic globalisation, increasing role of knowledge as a driver of growth, information and communication revolution) (Salmi, 2001), together with the process of Polish economic transformation, have contributed to the increase of Polish society's demand for knowledge. Polish HE, due to the implementation of the Higher Education Act of 12 September 1990, was able to respond to this increase in demand with a sudden growth in supply. However, this quantitative growth, expressed in the increasing number of private HEIs and the development of various forms of extramural studies, has not been accompanied by adequate development in quality.

Secondly, interest in quality issues has been catalysed by a progressive relative decrease in state funding for universities, which justified their slow change towards more entrepreneurial universities. Some HEIs have become so similar to businesses that it seems to be their priority to worry more about their market rating, since this determines their existence. They often focus on declaring a great quality of teaching by means of marketing tools, which enhances their image and position in the eyes of their most important stakeholders – members of society. However, the question arises whether there is a true attention to quality behind those declarations. Does the confrontation of newly adopted entrepreneurial values with academic ones foster or threaten the quality of teaching?

Finally, the questions of quality of teaching and its determinants are also highlighted in the objectives of the Bologna Process, which makes Polish higher education partially responsible for creating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

In response to the problem of quality of teaching, the majority of Polish HEIs have been focusing on working out the procedures of quality evaluation and assurance, which may appear insufficient if not accompanied by the evolution of universities' organisational culture towards a quality culture. Since what is crucial for the success of any action aimed at quality enhancement, is a quality-oriented system of values. This invisible determinant seems to be underestimated by universities striving for high quality of teaching.

The situation in Polish HE described above reveals the ***need to examine the influence of a university's quality culture on the quality of teaching***, which is the main aim of this paper. This, in the future, may help Polish HEIs provide teaching of high quality, rather than prove or manifest it by means of well developed quality assurance systems and procedures.

The main hypothesis states that *there is a strong positive correlation between the two variables examined: quality culture and quality of teaching.* Bearing in mind that both variables are of a complex character, the paper analyses this correlation with respect to particular elements of quality culture and quality of teaching. The paper also compares the correlation with reference to the type (regular/extramural), and a year of studies.

1 Anetta Kowalkiewicz, Assistant Professor at the Department of Education and Personnel Development at the Poznan University of Economics, Poland.

The area to verify the hypothesis is the business HE sector in Poland. In the transformation period, this sector had the strongest relationship with the emerging market economy, since it was responsible for meeting growing demand for managers, and management knowledge. Hence the 'quality crisis', as a result of quantitative growth, was revealed in a most spectacular way in business HE.

Quality culture as a determinant of quality of teaching

The notion of quality culture covers those elements of an organisational culture that have the strongest impact on quality of teaching (promote high quality or impede it). Thus, both concepts of organisational culture, and quality of teaching should be described prior to analysing the relation between them.

Organisational culture, and thus quality culture, has been defined according to a functionalist paradigm, which assumes that similar levels and functions of culture are documented in all organisations. It implies defining an analytical framework before stepping foot into the organisation to be studied. Functionalist analysis is conducted by filling in predefined variables and mapping the casual relations between them. Thus, the culture is added to such explanatory organisational variables as strategy, technology, environment. (Schultz, Hatch, 1996). According to Schein (1984. p. 3), organisational culture is 'the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be thought by new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems'. The aim of every organisation is survival, i.e. external adaptation, and problems appear when such adaptation is not possible with the given resources. Hence, organisational culture consists only of those values and assumptions that stimulate people's behaviours that are essential for the achievement of an organisation's formal aims (Sikorski, 2000).

Following Schein, a three levelled structure of organisational culture was accepted: deeply hidden assumptions, partially conscious values, and easily observable, although difficult to interpret, elements (Schein, 1984). Assumptions are a person's basic beliefs; they are unconscious and at the same time so ingrained that, in a sense, they are beyond discussion.

A value, according to Rokeach (1968), is an abstract ideal related to a specific object or situation, representing personal beliefs about the ways to realise and finally achieve those ideals. Values are indications concerning actions and behaviours. Hodgkinson (1983) claims that they are the preferable state of affairs. What is especially important for the diagnosis of culture is the discrepancy between declared and real values, emphasized by Hofstede (2000). While declared values relate to organisation members' wishes (general preferences concerning the good and the bad), the latter reflect their real wants (not necessarily appropriate ones).

As far as *quality of teaching* is concerned, the approach adopted in this article is based on its fitness for purpose and concentration on the process of teaching, rather than on its results (Ostaszewska, 2004a). Quality can be perceived differently depending on who defines it. For an academic institution it may mean 'perfection in developing students' intelligence, creativity and skills', and for the employer 'a degree of a graduate's preparation for the realisation of professional tasks' (O'Sullivan, 2001). It is very difficult to reconcile the expectations of all the stakeholders. Hence, quality of teaching ought to be defined with respect to the purpose that HEI declares in its education offer. Quality means, then, the extent to which education satisfies the requirements it encounters, referring to the aim for which it has been designed (Bazarnik, 2002). Besides, quality of teaching should focus on the teaching process and its environment, not on the results of teaching, which are difficult to measure, and depend to a great extent on students' attitude and engagement. Garden and Partington (1993) claim that it is the 'success with which an institution provides educational environments that enable students to effectively achieve valuable learning aims, involving proper academic standards'.

Thus, in this paper, quality of teaching is perceived as the degree to which all features of the teaching process enable achieving educational aims with respect to knowledge, skills and attitudes. This is a bottom-up approach, which makes the whole academic community responsible for the quality of teaching. As there is a wide range of views on the dimensions of quality of teaching (Grönroos, 1984; Gummesson, 1993; Leja, 2003; Berry et al, 1988), in this paper the set of quality dimensions compiled by Owlia and Aspinwall (1996) has been accepted, as they synthesise various approaches to dimensions and elements of service, software, and higher education quality into six elements: *Tangibles, Competence, Attitude, Programme content, Delivery, and Reliability.*

Among the main **determinants of quality of teaching** we can point out those directly influencing it, and those which determine quality indirectly (some of them are outside the university, i.e. legislative conditions, competition on educational market, demographic trends, etc.). The existence of both groups of factors is a necessary condition for the realisation of the teaching process. Still, is it a sufficient condition? Is the presence of high qualified teaching and administrative personnel, modern computer equipment and educational aids, rich library resources, or a large number of classrooms, enough fro one to talk about the high quality of teaching? It is definitely not, since it is the organisational culture, i.e. the values shared by teachers and students that determine the way in which the resources are finally used. Without academic teachers' readiness to share their knowledge, but also without students' individualism and their persistent pursuance of the truth, the personnel's competences will not bring the expected results. Without teachers' innovativeness, modern technical aids will not be used. Attractive methods of teaching will not succeed if students do not learn earnestly and responsibly. The examples mentioned illustrate the importance of appropriate quality culture values for the quality of teaching.

The importance of quality culture for the quality of teaching is best illustrated by the following: 'When common people unite around shared values and aims they achieve unusual results' (Blanchard, O'Connor, 1998). Hence, culture is the factor triggering the proper use of other resources of an organisation. It may be claimed that it is even more important in the light of the fact that the results of the process of teaching are not only knowledge and skills but also future economists' patterns of behaviours, formed directly by values.

It must be underlined that in studies of the **quality culture** with respect to HEIs, this concept is perceived mainly in terms of TQM (Total Quality Management) philosophy (Berry, 1997; Vermeulen, 1997), which reveals the role of leadership (personal example and the upper management's engagement) in creating the culture based on the constant need for improvement, team work, participation of all in the process making decisions, individual responsibility, etc. Quality culture is a set of values based on Deming's rules of quality (Freed, Klugman, and Fife, 1997). The studies of quality culture in HEIs have been summarized by Detert et al. (2001), who notice that most of the authors either concentrate on the elements connected to the use of TQM, and not on the values of quality culture, or attempt to measure the values determining TQM, applying the tools related to organisational culture in general and not quality culture. What follows from the conclusion is the need for the search of values crucial for developing quality culture, especially in a narrower sense, i.e. those which are the most important for quality of teaching, although this is only one of the three fundamental aims of a university.

Relationship between quality culture and quality of teaching – methodology of the research

Although organisational culture can be sensed within ten minutes of entering the enterprise (H. Simon, 1999), what is visible at first sight are' only elements which are the tip of the iceberg of culture. Assumptions are subconscious, so any attempt at learning them is doomed to failure. Still, one can try to learn values, which also belong to the essence culture. In order to do that, however, one must spend some time inside a given organisation. The most useful suggestion seems to be studying behaviours that stem from the values as well as

from the relations in a given organisation. It is behaviours that inform everyday life and carry information whether a given value is professed in a given environment or not. Much as they belong to the highest level of culture, behaviours can be perceived as the most direct symptoms of values, when they are compared to other elements, such as a company's logo, a characteristic discourse, and workers' appearance.

Behaviours, as for other cultural aspects, can be studied with the use of quantitative as well as qualitative methods. In both cases, one ought to follow the adopted paradigm concerning the perception of organisational culture *per se*. The functionalist paradigm adopted in this article implies a quantitative character of the studies, in which 'quantitative measures are used to verify hypotheses and generalize the results for the whole population. The aim of this kind of study is to find a cause and effect determination and prediction, i.e. a scientific future forecast and a generalisation of the results of the study. Quantitative studies look for understanding, illumination or extrapolation of the results achieved in similar situations, i.e. forming conclusions based on similarity and social reality is possible. As can be noticed, the knowledge obtained through qualitative studies is completely different from the knowledge obtained through quantitative studies' (Kostera, 2003). Nonetheless, qualitative methods can be an introduction to quantitative methods, while quantitative techniques can play only an auxiliary role to main qualitative studies of the symbolist paradigm (Konecki, 2000).

Empirical verification of the hypothesis was conducted in two stages. In the first one, a mail questionnaire survey was made to examine the opinions of experts in the quality of teaching in Polish higher economic education[2]. The survey aimed at identifying the values of quality culture, which were then used to work out the questionnaire measuring quality culture in HEIs. All 25 values that were identified (see Table 1), were then set at the level of behaviours (68 examples of behaviour in the final questionnaire). Each example was measured by two indicators of the organisational culture's strength: commonness, and expressiveness (Sathe, 1983). The commonness expressed then extent to which people accepted and realized a given type of culture, while expressiveness reflected how clear and sharp the idea of what is and what is not desirable was in people's minds.

The questionnaire also involved the measurement of quality of teaching in the six dimensions adopted from Owlia and Aspinwall.

The diagnosis of the variables was conducted in 2004 using the questionnaire survey method. In order to ensure the representativeness of the results, the sample of business HEIs was chosen by quota selection method, using three criteria: the age, size and ownership of the organisation. For each institution, a number of people from the academic community (teachers and students) was selected, using the representative method. Together, the diagnosis embraced nine HEIs, and 2416 questionnaires were submitted for further analysis. The results have been aggregated on the level of institutions using the Hellwig method[3]. On this level, hypotheses were verified based on the Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient obtained for the correlations studied.

Results and conclusions

First of all, the research confirmed the existence of a strong influence of quality culture on quality of teaching (the Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient for two aggregated variables was 0,62; α =0,05)[4] . It means that although universities offer education on much the same level and similar (economic) profile, they differ as far as the strength of quality culture is concerned. Quality culture largely determines the quality of the teaching they offer. On the one hand, it is an optimistic conclusion for those universities with a relatively lower value of their intellectual (staff's competence, scientific achievements) and material resources (classrooms, library, equipment, software). A low level of these resources does not necessarily mean that the teaching is worse.

2 The survey was conducted in 2003 among 40 experts belonging to one of the four Polish institutions that do research or initiate different activities aimed at improving quality of teaching: The State Accreditation Committee, Foundation for the Promotion and Accreditation of Economic Education, Association of Management Education FORUM, and Centre for Development of Economic Studies in Warsaw School of Economics.

3 The Hellwig method has been used to classify 9 HEIs according to the level of multidimensional variables: quality culture, and quality of teaching.

4 The Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient has been fixed on the grounds of the two rankings of 9 HEIs worked out by means of the Hellwig method, one with respect to quality culture, another to quality of teaching.

The result depends to a large extent on if and how the resources are used and this is crucially influenced by the values shared by an academic community. On the other hand, the confirmation of the strong influence of quality culture on quality of teaching may be a reason for concern for those institutions that, aiming at the improvement of quality of teaching, focus mainly on enlarging their potential and resources. By underestimating the importance of quality culture they neglect the factor that 'triggers' the potential. Such an approach may be effective as far as survival in the educational market is concerned, but questionable for the efficient implementation of the teaching aims.

As the diagnosis considered both teachers' and students' behaviours, the confirmation of a main hypothesis means that both groups decide to a large extent about the final results of teaching. In that case, the process of recruitment and selection of students appears to be especially important, not unlike the recruitment of teachers. Nevertheless, usually only the candidates' knowledge is examined in the process of recruitment, not the values they profess. The awareness of how strong quality of teaching depends on organisational quality points to the need for the constant education of academic teachers so that they recognise and create values in students.

Most of the quality culture values identified in the study appear to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching. Only *Readiness to experiment* resulted in a negative correlation (see Table 1).

No.	Values	r_s	r^2_s	No.	Values	r_s	r^2_s
1	Solidity	0.82	67%	14	Preciseness	0.53	28%
2	Analytical approach	0.80	64%	15	Politeness	0.53	28%
3	Truth	0.77	59%	16	Justice	0.48	23%
4	Action orientation	0.73	54%	17	Persistence	0.47	22%
5	Taking initiative	0.72	51%	18	Highly organised	0.33	11%
6	Hopeful attitude	0.70	49%	19	Sharing information	0.32	10%
7	Responsibility	0.67	44%	20	A sense of community	0.25	6%
8	Stability	0.67	44%	21	Independence	0.25	6%
9	Kindness	0.65	42%	22	Identifying with the organisation	0.15	2%
10	Helpfulness	0.58	34%	23	Innovativeness	0.07	0%
11	Constant improvement	0.55	30%	24	Cooperation with other members of the organisation	0.00	0%
12	Self-confidence	0.55	30%				
13	Decency	0.55	30%	25	Readiness to experiment	-0.53	28%

Key: < strong correlation   < medium correlation   < unclear correlation/no correlation

r_s - *Spearman's coefficient* r^2_s – *determination coefficient*

Table 1. Correlation between quality culture values and quality of teaching

Among the values whose positive effect has been confirmed there are six academic values: *Reliability, Truth, Responsibility, Kindness, Justice and Independence.* Most of them showed a strong correlation with quality of teaching, which means that, in spite of market pressures, deeply-rooted traditional values, which constitute the basis of university culture, have survived in higher education.

High results for values such as: *Action orientation, Taking initiative, Constant improvement, Self-confidence* may be related to the idea of entrepreneurship which is evolving more and more in universities (although Innovativeness has shown a relatively small effect on quality).

The lack of correlation in the case of *Cooperation with other members of the organisation* and a small influence on quality of teaching of such values as: *Identifying with the organisation, A sense of community* and *Justice* can be perceived as an undesirable result of the commercialisation of higher education. The process of teaching today often resembles the process of purchasing education, in which cooperation, engagement, willingness to share knowledge and to contribute to university's success, become insignificant.

The research confirmed a strong influence of quality culture on all the dimensions of quality of teaching, apart form *Tangibles* (see: Table 2).

Dimension	Spearman's coefficient r_s	Determination coefficient r^2_s
Attitude	0.98	97%
Competence	0.82	67%
Delivery	0.72	51%
Programme content	0.70	49%
Reliability	0.67	44%
Tangibles	0.13	2%

Key: <   strong correlation   <   unclear correlation/no correlation

Table 2. Correlation between quality culture and dimensions of quality of teaching

Moreover, a stronger impact of quality culture on quality of teaching was found for external than for regular studies. In the case of external studies, where a student has relatively less contact with a teacher, culture is especially important. Hence, the quality of this kind of studies can be improved through putting more stress on this aspect of teaching; especially since it is difficult to shape patterns of behaviours in such a short time. The influence of culture on quality of teaching on particular years of studying, on the other hand, differs only slightly (in each case one can notice a strong correlation).

On the basis of conducted research, important implications can be drawn for different groups of HE stakeholders. First, in concentrating on market advantage, universities ought to pay attention to whether their declarations reflect the real quality of teaching and quality culture. It is crucial to realise that the values connected to market activities can be dangerous for academic values, which should be promoted even more. One way of promoting desirable quality culture in schools may be by including this aspect in internal systems of quality assurance. The universities' authorities should consider the creation of desirable quality culture as an input that may appear to be much lower than the hidden costs of a lack of appropriate culture.

Then, students and candidates should focus their expectations of HEIs on the teaching process itself and not on its results, whereas teachers should initiate enhancing quality culture by improving themselves, and promoting it among students.

Nor can the government, in its higher education policy, neglect the importance of the cultural conditions of quality of teaching. It should take into account the assessment of quality culture in accreditation procedures.

Embedding graduate survey indicators into internal quality assurance systems - What can institutions learn from graduate surveys?

Anna Prades and Sebastián Rodríguez[1]

Graduate surveys: some warnings

Graduate feedback is crucial because of the need for an 'understanding of one's present market and relative performance in key dimensions (to) enhance departmental planning and programme development' (Martin et al, 2000). However, it is necessary, when analysing graduate surveys, to take into account the complexity and multidimensionality of the graduate's transition to employment. It is obvious that the transition from higher education to employment has become a complex process requiring substantial time and effort and often stretches over a long period (Teichler, 1997). To what degree are variables of a macroeconomic (stemming from the relationship between educational output and market demand) or microeconomic (connected with graduate characteristics) nature involved? Which variables have a direct effect on outcomes?

It can be affirmed that the process of gaining employment depends on the existence of a social context of opportunities generated on different contextual levels (Figuera, 1996):

1. **The university-labour market binomial**
   The interaction between the higher education system ('production') and the qualified labour market ('demand') makes up the explanatory macro-context for obtaining employment.

   The characteristics and trends in production **by the educational system** are the result of the interaction of a series of determinants: socio-demographic factors, training supply and entry requirements, selection patterns of the students admitted, etc.

   At the same time, the **demand for graduates** is conditioned by the structure and trends of the labour market: factors such as developments in the economy and technological development affect the hiring policies of private enterprise.

2. **The educational qualification as a mechanism between the macro and micro-context**
   The objective possibilities of a specific cohort finding employment will depend on the relationship between the scope of the particular or specific field of work, which depends exclusively on the law of supply and demand and how much both dimensions are in line, and the competitiveness of a particular group in the open labour market, conditioned by the preferences laid down by the labour market, the transparency of recruitment processes and the leverage capacity of professional groups.

3. **The 'employer recruitment process vs. the university graduate's exploratory activity' binomial**
   The final point of entering the labour market can be represented by the process of convergence between the university graduate's exploratory activity (research activity, involvement and attitude, etc.) and the recruitment process followed by the employer.

1 Anna Prades, Project Manager at the AQU Catalunya, Spain; Sebastián Rodríguez, Coordinator of innovation and development in quality assessment at the AQU Catalunya, Spain.

Graduate survey utility

Graduate surveys might be useful for different stakeholders. They may serve many purposes.

1. In the first place, this information is valuable for the academic institutions themselves[2].
It is a basic benchmark for university planning, assessment and innovation.

▌ At the institutional level, institutional mechanisms are required that ensure dissemination of information on the development of and trends in the labour market both to and within institutions. Graduate surveys can be a good tool although there are alternative and complementary methods, such as the professional experience of academic staff, obtaining the views and opinions of employers, etc.

▌ At the faculty or department level, programme specifications need to be compared with the job functions of graduates, and the perceived gap in skills.

▌ Also at the faculty or department level, graduate surveys might be used to reflect upon the practical dimension of the curricula. The coherence of student internship/external practicum must be analysed in relation to the actual situation in the labour market. Where and how do students do their practicum and final-year project/dissertation? Are companies that are involved in student internship programmes similar to those that hire graduates?

Research has shown that an individual's initial job placement is critical in determining status and earning attainment in later career positions (Mau and Kopischke, 2001). Furthermore, work experience during university studies may be either a favourable factor for university studies or a neutral one or a hindrance (Rodríguez, 2005). This will depend on two factors: the field of study and the type of work (associated or not with the studies).

2. In the second place, information must be key to employment services
Employment services need to be aware of how they can be really useful to students in their search for employment, what the main factors are for graduates to find good employment, etc., and they need to apply this knowledge in defining counselling and careers advisory processes.

Given an increasingly competitive job market, a diverse work force and the consequences of initial job placement, an understanding of job search behaviour and the work experience of the major contributing workforce become critical (Mau, Kopsichke, 2001).

The graduate placement survey results can be used in a two-fold way by career services:
a) To know the work environment possibilities for a programme or group of similar programmes: how to gain access to the labour market, what sectors, and what are the usual types of contract.
b) To guide students in defining their professional careers, in designing their curricula vitae, and in overcoming any possible competence deficits detected in the surveys.

3. And finally, Information is also fundamental to inform and guide students and graduates
From the personal or individual point of view, information on ways to find and obtain employment is fundamental in providing help and guidance to students and graduates through both career services and tutorials led by teaching staff. Another student sector that can benefit from this information is that of

2 According to ENQA standards (ENQA, 2005), an institution's information systems (required in Standard 6) are expected to include, amongst other things, figures on graduate employability and student satisfaction with study programmes. In addition, graduate surveys provide valuable information on two of the subject-specific standards: they provide key information for the monitoring of study programmes such as feedback from graduates, programme labour market relevance, achievement of intended learning outcomes (Standard 2); as well as the assessment of the learning resources and student support, especially those referring to transition processes (Standard 5).

secondary education, to be able to plan and decide on training pathways using reliable data on degrees in the professional field.

Background to the 'graduate transition to the labour market' assessment programme

The concern regarding graduates' careers is not just a recent phenomenon. Various Catalan universities began to carry out research into graduate employment more than twenty years ago. During the nineties, a total of six universities surveyed in overall terms more than 21,000 graduates (Figuera and Vivas, 2000). Despite the undeniable value of these studies, different methodologies were used (population definition, instrument, etc.), making it impossible to obtain an overview of the Catalan university system or establish a benchmark to evaluate the results regarding graduate employment. Experience gained since then has also served to confirm that information on the results of graduate employment does not generate change in itself.

In 2000, AQU Catalunya consequently set up a committee made up of experts on graduate employment from each Catalan university to define the procedure for assessing the process of transition to the labour market[3]. One of the first of the committee's conclusions was that, to be able to carry out the evaluation process, benchmarks for the results of graduate employment were necessary.

There are five elements that stand out from the assessment process:

▌The graduate survey was designed to gather useful information for decision-making processes in the various dimensions involved in the transition to the labour market (syllabus, practical dimension of the curriculum and career services).

▌The survey and assessment guidelines were designed by experts from each university that took part in the assessment. It was thus an instrument that was developed by consensus and based on the universities' prior experience.

▌The results of the graduate placement study, obtained using the same instrument for the same year (three years after graduating), provide the universities with benchmarks that enable them to compare their graduate employment results with aggregate data for related study programmes in the entire system.

▌The database resulting from the study was sent to the universities. They were also given the overall results for the whole of Catalonia, aggregated according to disciplines and groups of related programmes.

▌The entire database (without the identity of the universities being revealed) was also made available to the academic community for the purpose of understanding and carrying out further research on the transition into the labour market.

Table 1 shows the reference population and sample of the two graduates surveys coordinated so far by AQU Catalunya.

Table 1. Technical features				
	Population	Sample	Response Rate	Sample Error
2001 Graduate survey	21.146	9.766	46.19	0.70
2005 Graduate Survey	21.767	11.456	52.63	0.64

---

3 As a reference for carrying out the assessment, the committee used the document by Harvey and Green (1993), and the proposal of the Association of Dutch Polytecnics and Colleges (1993), especially with regard to assessment from the labour market perspective.

Table 2 shows the scope of both graduate surveys. As can be seen, the surveys included not only figures on employment status and characteristics, but also information gathered on training satisfaction and suitability.

	Table 2. Scope of the graduate survey
1	Identification data: gender, university, degree programme
2	Employment status: employed/unemployed/idly unemployed
3	Previous employment experience: work during the 2 years prior to graduation (part time/full time, subject related/unrelated)
4	Characteristics of current employment: - Quality of the job: specific degree required when getting the job, only a university degree required, no degree required. Whether the job requires a specific degree, a university education, or no university training required. - Where: company size, ownership (Spanish/international), job location - What: functions, job description (open field), competences required - Salary, type of contract, etc.
5	Important factors enabling graduates to obtain a job: relevance of degree programme, languages, etc.
6	Training assessment: level and suitability of: a) Theory and practical training b) Generic skills: interpersonal, cognitive and instrumental skills

With all the information collected and the indicators available to the universities, the challenge was then how to use this material to enable universities to become aware of their strong and weak points and enhance the quality of the higher education that they offer; in other words, what works well and what needs attention in the process of graduate transition from higher education to the labour market.

Using graduate survey results. Some examples

This section offers different examples on how graduate survey information might be used. The examples, which use real data from the two job placement surveys carried out so far in Catalonia, do not include all the indicators from the job placement survey, neither do they purport to give a particular point of view regarding the results of graduate job placement. Their only objective is to illustrate the different uses to which the indicators on graduate job placement can be put for analysing and evaluating different aspects, in order for these to be incorporated into quality assurance systems.

Utility for planning: do we need so many graduates?
Increased participation in higher education has led to the discussion of whether there are too many graduates (MacLeod-Brudenell, 2003). The following table lists the different kind of data that can be used to answer this question, such as the employment rate or job suitability, exemplified by the results for 2005 in Catalonia:

Table 3. Items provided by graduate surveys regarding graduate demand	
Items	Example from the 2005 survey (on the 2001 graduate cohort)
Employment rate	**90.2% of the graduates were in employment at the time of being interviewed for the survey.** Health Sciences is the subject area with the highest employment rate (94%), with the Experimental Sciences having the lowest (84%).
University degree and job suitability	Degree type is a key factor in placement: 64% needed a specific degree, while the figure for those who found it immaterial what type of degree was required was only 16%
	75% of all those interviewed declared that a university degree was required for their current job, with 58% requiring a particular specialisation (88% in the Health Sciences compared to 41% in the Humanities).
Job functions	90% of those interviewed stated that they carried out qualified job functions, whereas only 10% said their functions were non-qualified.
Satisfaction regarding one's degree	**71.3% of the graduates interviewed stated that they would repeat the same degree if they had to choose a university degree again.** The differences between subject areas varied from 76% in the Health Sciences to 68% in the Humanities.

According to Table 3, the Catalan labour market as a whole absorbs the total number of graduates and it appears that having a university degree continues to contribute added value, although it is necessary to compare these data with the same indicators for other educational levels in order to clarify this[4].

Utility for planning: what must students learn regarding the professional dimension of their studies?
When the programme specification is being defined and decisions made regarding the most suitable contents for the programme, information is necessary on where graduates work, in what type of enterprise, what they need, etc. (see Table 4).

Table 4. Useful survey indicators for analysing the programme specification	
Professional benchmark	- Description of the work - Training requirements (specific degree, university degree, or a degree is not required) - Sector (public or private) - Job functions - Subject-specific competences required, transversal competences required - What it involves, what demands are made in terms of subject-specific and transversal competences

Knowledge of the employment sectors is especially important for deciding, for example, whether a particular degree should be generalist or specialist.

Utility in curriculum design (teaching methods)
Research has documented a very close relationship between what takes place in the classroom and the student's academic and cognitive development (Cabrera, Colbeck and Terenzini, 1999). Obtaining the opinion of graduates regarding the level of training in particular competences can thus provide information on the effectiveness of what takes place in the classroom. The data in Table 5 appear to support this hypothesis. Graduates in chemical engineering from university B, which, from the first year, uses a problem-based teaching approach, give a higher than average rating, compared to graduates of similar studies from a different university with an approach based on classes, master classes and summative evaluations.

Table 5. Employment data graduates in Industrial Engineering (Technical), specialising in industrial chemistry. *Assess the level of training acquired in the following competences*					
	Oral expression (1-7)	Written communication (1-7)	Team work (1-7)	Leadership (1-7)	Management (1-7)
University A (2005)	3.00	3.27	3.80	2.53	3.40
University B with PBL approach (2005)	4.63	4.56	5.81	5.13	4.88

Thus, graduate surveys might be used in order to assess the teaching approach to generic or transversal competencies.

Utility in achievement assessment: comparing what graduates learned with what they effectively need
The mastery of 'general skills' is an expected outcome of higher education, whatever the degree specialisation. One of the key roles of higher education in the preparation for employment is seen to lie in the creation of conditions for making graduates generally competent through the fostering of skills that are 'transferable' between one job situation and another (Brennan *et al*, 1993).

Analysis of the differences between the level of training and the usefulness of the training in the work place enables the **job competence deficit** to be detected (see Table 6 for the deficit results according to discipline in 2005). It should be borne in mind however that assessment of the level that certain competences are

4 According to the data from this survey, the unemployment rate in 2005 was 4.8%, which was lower than the unemployment rate for the working population (8.3%) (Source: EPA, 2006, second quarter).

required in the work place only makes sense when graduates are at least carrying out functions that require university-developed competences. As can be seen from the table, all of the competences analysed, except for theoretical training, show a deficit, meaning that graduates consider that they need more competence than that received in the level of training. Analysis of the information is also very revealing; for example, graduates in Experimental Sciences have difficulties in eight out of the fourteen competences analysed, which reveals the need for changes in the training methodologies in those subjects, where the established approach is concentrated on 'knowledge for knowledge's sake', that provide for a more appropriate transition for graduates.

Table 6. Perceived competence deficit (Level of training – Usefulness of the competence in the work place)						
	Humanities	Social Science	Experimental Sc.	Health Science	Technical	Total
Theoretical training	0.80	0.57	0.97	0.31	0.63	0.61
Practical training	-0.50	-0.54	0.02	-0.59	-0.43	-0.47
Written communication	-0.14	-0.46	-1.11	-0.66	-0.87	-0.61
Oral expression	-1.13	-1.02	-1.58	-1.26	-1.24	-1.16
Team work	-0.71	-0.51	-0.68	-0.68	-0.57	-0.58
Leadership	-1.04	-0.83	-1.44	-0.90	-1.35	-1.05
Problem solving	-1.28	-1.09	-0.96	-1.16	-0.86	-1.05
Decision making	-1.31	-1.21	-1.53	-1.45	-1.35	-1.31
Critical thinking	-0.09	-0.44	-0.59	-0.91	-0.70	-0.54
Creativity	-0.74	-0.84	-1.02	-0.92	-0.71	-0.82
Management	-1.04	-0.86	-1.25	-1.11	-1.21	-1.03
Documentation	-0.14	-0.44	-0.82	-0.60	-0.51	-0.47
Languages	-0.89	-1.02	-1.88	-1.59	-1.62	-1.30
Computer	-1.85	-1.54	-1.46	-1.74	-1.26	-1.52

NB: The deficit was calculated by subtracting the mean for each competence that is necessary in the work place from the mean for the assessment of the training received at university. This calculation only included the total number of graduates who were employed at the time of the survey and with functions that require university-developed competences (a total of 8,434, or 73.6% of the sample).

Conclusions

▌ The complexity of the process of transition to the labour market means that the results of employment surveys should be taken as a source of different types of evidence by the various stakeholders, although they should in no way be used out of context nor be used as determining factors for the university's actions.

▌ The content of the surveys should include variables that prove useful for analytical processes concerning the programme specification, the scope of practical work in the curriculum and career services.

▌ The most significant indicators for each of these would be as follows:

▌ Design of the programme specification
  ▌ Employment/unemployment rate
  ▌ Quality of employment
  ▌ Job functions
  ▌ Satisfaction with the training received (level of training)
  ▌ Competences required (level of training – extent to which the competences are required on the job)

▌ Scope of practical work in the curriculum
  ▌ Career services
  ▌ Job functions
  ▌ Competences required

- Career services
  - Employment background (work during studies)
  - Ways to gain access
  - Contracting factors
  - Type of contracts
  - Competences required

In summary, graduate surveys offer extremely valuable information to institutions, although the process of assessing graduate transition to the labour market revealed that they are often under-used. The assessment process provides certain clues for ways to improve the embedding of these indicators in processes involving the internal quality assurance of degree programmes and institutions and shows how they are useful for analysing the three key elements involved in the process of graduate transition to the labour market: defining and reviewing programme specifications, practical work in the curriculum, and designing and evaluating actions that promote the transition from higher education to the labour market.

6. THE ARTICULATION OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL QUALITY PROCESSES

Practice and effects of self-evaluation in the institutional evaluation processes of CNÉ - A study based on 17 evaluation reports of higher education institutions of Ile-de-France

Fabrice Hénard[1] In collaboration with Paolo Blasi, Josep Bricall, Bruno Curvale

Study context

The new self-evaluation approach proposed by the CNÉ
In 2004, the Comité national d'évaluation (CNÉ – National Evaluation Committee) launched a series of institutional evaluations of the higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Ile-de-France region (the greater Paris area). The present study is based on the contents of the 17 reports[2].

This evaluation campaign reflected a shift in CNÉ's methods that was aimed at placing self-evaluation at the very centre of the evaluation procedure. A self-evaluation tool, called the *Handbook of Standards for Quality Management[3]* , was distributed to the HEIs, which used it to conduct their self-evaluation. The CNÉ adopted a working method that invites institutions to provide evidence-based answers in accordance with the reference guidelines provided in the *Handbook of Standards*. Each reference includes criteria, which may be freely modified by the institutions. The CNÉ decided not to intervene in the self-evaluation process, other than presenting or explaining the *Handbook of Standards* on request. For the institutions, this kind of self-evaluation was an original evaluation practice.

The context of higher education in France
In order to fully grasp the implications of this study, it is necessary to bear in mind a few facts about the French context concerning the autonomy of educational institutions.

The law of 26 January 1984 on higher education reaffirms the principles of the law of 1968: involvement of the academic, technical and administrative staff and of the students in the running of the HEIs, multi-disciplinary education, education leading to professional integration and autonomy of the institutions. However, this autonomy is still weak.

In the universities, the rector's authority (*Président*) relies on three large councils whose members are elected (executive council, research council and council for education and university life). He/she also must govern while working with several faculties or departments (*composantes*), which are more or less autonomous within the university and have their own elected councils, as well as the research laboratories, some of which are of greater renown than the universities to which they are attached. More autonomy has been granted to the institutions since 1989, with four-year contracts that commit the university and the state to specific objectives to be achieved. However, most of the resources are still allocated according to statistical criteria that are established to meet principles of equity. The HEIs still do not have an overall budget. They do not have their own estate.

Although educational freedom is the rule in the universities, the programmes they offer are limited by the national policies that are part of the authorisation decisions made by the Ministry of Education, which grant national recognition to the degrees awarded by institutions of higher education.

In most domains, the institutions do not select their students, and the level of student fees are set by the state. Nor do they have complete control over the management of teaching staff careers, which are driven via national-based orientations grounded on scientific criteria for each discipline.

1 Fabrice Hénard, Evaluation coordinator at the CNÉ, France.

2 The evaluation reports are available at the CNÉ web site: http://www.cne-evaluation.fr. They contain the analysis of the self-evaluation carried out by the institutions. The self-evaluation reports themselves are not published.

3 The *Handbook of Standards for Quality Management* is a public document, also available in several languages at the CNÉ web site: http://www.cne-evaluation.fr.

The second type of constraints comes from developments in the French training and research landscape. The current movements are going in the direction of creating centres of excellence to promote interaction between research bodies, businesses and public bodies. Yet HEIs, which welcome students and teachers and bring together the scientific strength of laboratories through their *doctoral schools*, struggle to be at the centre of the organisational changes in research. While programmes offered are often distributed over several institutions, the overlap of scientific activities, which is intense in the Ile-de-France region, blocks both initiatives and the visibility of higher education institutions.

At the time of the evaluations conducted by the CNÉ, the institutions were, on the one hand, involved with setting up the Bachelor-Master-Doctorate scheme (referred to as below as BaMa/D, for '*LMD*' or *Licence-Master-Doctorat*), which called upon all of their internal capacities. At the same time, they were beginning to conform to the requirements of the new law governing finance. These facts should be kept in mind, since they partially explain the difficulties encountered by university rectors in integrating the internal evaluation process into their institutions' strategies. This is why, as a result, the self-evaluation may have seemed to them like an unwelcome additional task.

Successful involvement of institutions in self-evaluation

A centralised supervision of the self-evaluation process
The 17 institutions conducted their self-evaluations up to the point of producing a report. In most institutions, the rectors assigned the self-evaluation procedure to a team that was especially formed for the purpose. These teams included members who were accustomed to working together as well as senior management staff (executive directors, vice-rectors, etc.) The academic community's contribution to producing the self-evaluation reports varied depending on how much they were encouraged by the rectors.

Teaching staff and administrative managers primarily contributed to the self-evaluation reports. Student involvement in the self-evaluation process remained low, whether in terms of reflection or contributions to writing or to validation of the self-evaluation report. The institutions where students participated in the self-evaluation were those that promoted a climate of dialogue, as the result of constant attention to student life (institutional, group activities, etc.). In this situation, it appears that students were prepared to view the evaluation as a normal process and therefore to participate in it. Likewise, the institutions that have a stronger identity align more closely with their students, who willingly produced contributions or participated in the self-evaluation unit.

The production of the report greatly depended on the level of involvement of the university rectors. This reflected a variety of approaches:

▊ 'Factual approach': the rector wished to respect the balance between different viewpoints within his institution, without taking any sides. This approach tends to limit the self-evaluation to a compilation of contributions. However, it may also underpin the prudence of the rector for whom self-evaluation may rock the boat within the institution. Sometimes, this approach may also reveal the institution's difficulty in carrying out the self-evaluation process.

▊ 'Activist approach': the rector believed that the self-evaluation should reflect the policy choices and vision of the management team elected on a given programme. The rector may also have considered the self-evaluation as a foundation for building or refining an institutional strategy. The rector may have allowed the academic community to express itself freely, but the self-evaluation report ultimately reflected his own analysis. The political nature of the report prevailed in this case.

‖ 'Formal approach': the rector considered himself obliged to respond to an order from the national evaluation agency, and complied with a regulatory requirement. In this case, the self-evaluation report was equated with an activity report that was more or less backed by the institution.

The value of the self-evaluation according to the HEIs
In most cases, the self-evaluation was initially considered as an internal means of gathering information about the reality of the institution's activities. The self-evaluation process became an element of a communication strategy for those who saw the procedure in terms of the strategic plan or the four-year contract. They perceived the self-evaluation process as a lever for affirming the uniqueness of their institution and a means for advancing their performance when they occupy highly competitive niches. Other institutions saw the self-evaluation as a valuable resource to be used both within and without the institution when negotiating, especially with the government. The self-evaluation procedure was also used as a means for launching a debate, for eliciting critiques by comparing viewpoints or for bringing before the entire academic community a discourse that could not be readily held by a council (for example, a discussion of the reorganisation of the research teams or streamlining of departments). Another viewpoint of the self-evaluation was that it could be used as an avenue for reforming the management of the institution, or even the starting point for a long-term quality approach.

But while the procedure was seen as a positive step and was described in terms of many virtues by the institutions, the value of the self-evaluation process as a quality management tool was under-used. HEIs rarely stressed the interest of sustainable self-evaluation mechanisms and self-evaluation was experienced as a one-off exercise.

What the content of self-evaluation reports reveals

Fair self-awareness
In general, the institutions have a fair self-awareness. The institutions' knowledge of their training and research activities has improved enormously. All of them have provided detailed and accurate information regarding their student body, teaching staff and technical and administrative personnel, and the specific features of their training and their own resources. Encouraged, first by the four-year contract, and now by the new finance law, the institutions are producing data. This is a precious asset for external evaluators. The experience of collecting and processing the data by permanent internal bodies favours the constitution of databases and statistics that are updated and no longer an object of dispute within the institution or with the authorities.

HEIs were helped by the four-year contracts that have obliged them over the last 15 years to set objectives and to make choices[4]. Now they are beginning to develop project procedures and to use quality management tools and processes. The implementation of the Ba/Ma/D scheme was another driver for the development of a certain level of QA.

In addition, the institutions are aware of the emergence of strong European and worldwide competition, both in terms of the education offer and in terms of the research and the economic value of it. In contrast, most of the institutions made little mention of the changes brought about by the construction of the European higher education area in terms of quality assurance.

Some difficulties in achieving the self-evaluation report
Some weaknesses found in the self-evaluation reports deserve to be highlighted. The self-evaluation reports minimised the relationship between the institutions and their environments. On the contrary, they revealed a relatively self-centred view of their activities, ignoring the trends of outside forces that influence them. In

4 This was confirmed by the General Office evaluation of the plan for government contract policy in 2004.

general, few institutions seized the self-evaluation opportunity to highlight the advances they have made, their best practices or their experience in certain fields of activity or in their operating methods. Also, some of the self-evaluation reports leaned more towards self-criticism – often severe – of their activities. The institutions strained to set the level of criticism at a fair level.

The low capacity for evidence-based reasoning remains a significant weakness. The self-evaluation reports contained little information that was backed by evidence or that was verifiable. The descriptive approach prevailed. The figures to support an answer on a given topic were often absent, although many institutions have statistical mechanisms or information and prospective units that are supposed to produce indicators. The points of comparison with other national or international institutions were non-existent. Some institutions occasionally dared to make comparisons, but only to defend their originality better and without using this comparison to make progress.

The reasoning mainly relied on a deterministic view of actions: the institution established a direct link between an activity and an expected result, evincing the multiple outside factors that may strengthen or diminish its effects (e.g., the success rate for a given degree and the integration of students into the business world are far from correlated). Similarly, institutions rarely included the historical context of the institution that could help the reader to understand better the current complexity of the situation. The self-evaluation reports also confused the description of an actual situation at the time of the self-evaluation with the presentation of a possible future situation. In the reports, there was an overlap between tangible reality and virtual projects.

Some factors explain the limited evidence-based reasoning. To begin with, the pedagogical role of CNÉ with respect to the institutions was deliberately limited. It provided non-prescriptive self-evaluation support (meetings, phone support, handouts…). Then the institutions themselves wondered about the need to reveal all, including their internal dysfunctions, in a written report. Several institutions feared that the self-evaluation would harm their national reputations or add to tensions that were already felt internally.

Numerous but under-used statistics
It is noteworthy progress that the HEIs provided numerous statistics and included them in self-evaluation reports or projects presented to the authorities, in order to inform, communicate or negotiate. However, they still do not use the full potential of the statistics that they have at hand. Highly advanced information systems requiring very heavy investments, in terms of finances and of personnel training, have been installed but are under-used. When tools are deployed, little or no thought is given to the organisational changes they will induce within the HEIs. Finally, the figures obtained are too weakly consolidated.

Indicators used should logically enable the institutions to analyse changes that are a direct result of their actions. Yet they do not back up the cause and effect link between an action and an impact. They simply measure a change that might well be caused by factors outside the institution.

Conclusions

Self-evaluation is a necessity for the higher education institutions
HEIs are beginning to wake up to the need for building up self evaluation and more generally an internal quality culture. However, several questions remain unanswered: does self-evaluation reveal the entire reality of an institution? Is self-evaluation capable of addressing every challenge met by the institution? How to distinguish the picture given by the self-evaluation from the overall reality?

Self-evaluation is a political tool

The spread of quality culture in France still depends first on the initiative from authorities (the new finance law, ministry indications of new contracts in the works) and the influence of reforms on a nationwide scale (BaMa/D scheme, and construction of the European area for higher education).

At the level of the institution, the differentiating factors for a quality culture do not depend on the type of institution. The size of the institution, the disciplinary approach, the territorial stronghold cannot be pinpointed as factors that either impede or favour the development of an internal quality culture. The position of the HEIs towards self-evaluation and more generally towards quality assurance is a driver for the extension of internal quality culture.

Indeed, the self-evaluation reports revealed the values of several communities that co-exist within the institutions. The values convey the meaning that these communities assign to their missions (e.g., educational freedom, the autonomy of higher education, the educational commitment of teaching staff, a policy of welcoming all students, involvement in research, etc.). The analysis of the self-evaluation reports shows that rectors who are attentive to good governance of their institutions seek to get involved in the self-evaluation process and do not allow it to become a technocratic procedure. In such institutions, the tools were usually ample and quality management systems were emerging. Institutions that were accustomed to turning their reflections into issues and subjecting them to discussion viewed the self-evaluation process as an opportunity to compare viewpoints and instil a degree of plurality into their reflections. In institutions where the strategic policies are clear-cut and assumed by the rector's staff, and where there is a strategic plan that establishes the policy lines, quality management tools were perceived as useful levers by the academic community.

Indispensable external evaluations

The development of quality management is a project that institutions need to pursue. Whereas primary responsibility lies with each institution, it should not obscure the need for external evaluations. External evaluations help legitimise the self-evaluation process, even if the latter has been produced internally. They also make it possible to gauge the relevance of the chosen quality assurance policy and evaluate the utilisation of the tools that have been set up. They complete the information provided by the self-evaluation report, identifying the main causes of any problems encountered, which is not easy to do from within the institution. They also compensate for the absence of measurements and points of reference, especially when the quantitative aspect is lacking in the self-evaluation.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Quality culture, quality assurance and impact
Overview of discussions
Lee Harvey[1]

The following is a synthesis of the outcomes of the eight open discussion groups at the forum, and the subsequent plenary, that addressed questions about the nature of quality culture, the link between a quality culture and internal and external quality assurance processes, and the impact of quality processes on teaching, learning and research.

Quality culture

Although there was much discussion around quality culture, there were few attempts in the discussion sessions or the forum as a whole to define quality culture. However, there was considerable exploration of the characteristics of a quality culture.

The following features emerged as indicative of a quality culture:

⬧ There is academic ownership of quality.

⬧ There is a recognition by academics and administrators of need for a system of quality monitoring to ensure accountability (and compliance where required) and to facilitate improvement. However, this should not be a 'bureaucratic' system.

⬧ Quality culture is primarily about the behaviour of stakeholders rather than the operation of a quality system.

⬧ The quality system needs to have a clear purpose, which articulates with the quality culture.

⬧ A quality culture places students at the centre.

⬧ A quality culture is about partnership and co-operation, sharing of experiences and team working.

⬧ A quality culture is about supporting the individual as an autonomous scholar but not at the expense of the learning community; there is a symbiotic relationship between individual and community.

⬧ Leadership in a quality culture is inspirational rather than dictatorial. Leadership is at all levels in the institution and does not refer to just senior managers.

⬧ A quality culture welcomes external critical evaluation from a variety of sources including formal external evaluations, external peers acting as critical friends, and internal peer review and support.

⬧ At heart a quality culture is about facilitating and encouraging reflexivity and praxis; self-reflection, developing improvement initiatives and implementing them.

There was a debate about whether a quality assurance system (internal and/or external) is a prerequisite for the development of a quality culture within an institution or department or whether it operates the other way round. Does an institution need to have developed a quality culture prior to (effective) implementation of a process of quality assurance? There was no clear answer to this and it seems most agree that the culture and the system need to grow together in harmony.

1 Lee Harvey, Director of Centre for Research and Evaluation at Sheffield Hallam University, United Kingdom.

Benefits of a quality culture

The benefits of a quality culture are that it increases co-operation, gives students a voice that is heard, provides a strong front for an institution in a competitive higher education world and provides a context for change. Indeed, a strong quality culture encourages and enables change, champions innovation and allows staff to take risks, admit failure and learn from mistakes. However, even a strong quality culture can be characterised by lack of risk taking where the external quality evaluations are 'high stakes' activities and where they encourage compliance rather than improvement.

Barriers to quality culture

There was discussion about the barriers that inhibit the development of a quality culture. In many respects these mirror the characteristics. It was argued that external quality assurance can inhibit the development of a quality culture as, if the assurance process has 'high stakes', then this may lead to risk aversion on the part of academics and administrators. If there is too much to lose as a result of a poor evaluation, the quality culture will be one of compliance and conservatism rather than being expansive, innovative and risk-taking.

The development of a quality culture can also be inhibited in a situation of heterogeneous departmental structures and practices, although that is not to suggest complete uniformity of quality culture across an institution. A quality culture will also be difficult to establish if there is a lack of consistency in policy and strategy and if implementation procedures keep changing.

Incompatibility between quality strategy and quality assurance processes also acts as a barrier to the development of a quality culture, especially if the quality assurance processes are inappropriate — they do not reflect the normal working practices of staff. This is exacerbated if there is a lack of action following internal or external quality reviews. In short, the quality process is not seen as part of everyday life.

A quality culture demands a team-working approach and will be undermined if there is a lack of cohesion, if, to use a metaphor, there are too many soloists in the orchestra. A successful quality culture also attempts to involve everyone in innovative quality improvement.

Internal quality culture and external quality assurance

It was noted, in the discussions, that quality is not a new issue, what is new is the collective formalisation of quality. It was further suggested that external quality assurance procedures are a necessary precursor to building a system of internal quality assurance. Again, though, it would seem that external procedures should be flexible enough to reflect internal procedures and cultures and those internal procedures should not be slavish adherents to external processes if they do not suit the development of a particular culture of quality. There needs to be a symbiotic relationship between internal and external procedures, mediated by the institutional quality culture (or cultures).

In that respect, a degree of autonomy is necessary for the development of a good quality culture that feeds into and embraces the internal quality processes. Indeed, there was a suggestion that if there is a strong quality culture in the institution this provides the basis for improvement and external quality assurance becomes redundant. Along with this was the view expressed that some countries have had too much external evaluation.

In any event it is important that there is strong mutual trust at all interfaces, within the institution and between the institution and the external reviewers and agencies.

There was also a suggestion that employers could be involved more in quality processes and that they can add effectively to the quality culture by providing external experiences that feed into quality enhancement. In many respects, employers appear to be an under-used resource, particularly in professional and applied areas where they could potentially have a useful role.

Types of quality assurance

There was some discussion about the nature and types of external quality assurance. The question was posed as to whether quality assurance is essentially a process or a product? Thus, is the point of quality assurance to encourage continuous improvement or to be a reward based on outcomes? The debate about purposes of higher education quality assurance has been rehearsed elsewhere (Harvey, 2004) and the discussion did not delve into that debate in full but focused mainly on the difference between accreditation and audit. It was suggested that accreditation, with its focus on a binary decision is not quality assurance. Accreditation, it was suggested, has limited impact on quality because it encourages concealment of weaknesses. On the other hand, audit, which is about evaluating the institutional quality assurance procedures, is process-oriented and provides the basis for continuous improvement.

However, there was something of a dilemma when it came to international recognition and there perhaps accreditation has a role. However, that does not mean that all programmes in all institutions need to be accredited, which would be a hugely overblown bureaucratic process, excessively costly and quite unnecessary in institutions that have agency-audited, internal quality assurance systems.

On the international front there was remarkably little in the discussions about the European perspective when it came to internal and external audits. The focus was clearly on the institutional view. Where the *European Standards and Guidelines* were discussed, it was normally in the context of them needing to be contextualised to a national level. In addition, the jury is still out on the articulation between quality assessment and the European Qualifications Framework.

Impact of external quality assurance

In the keynote, Bjorn Stensaker suggested that external quality assurance procedures have an impact on the higher education environment in various ways (see this volume, Stensaker, 2006). Similarly, in a recent conference under the auspices of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, the agency delegates maintained that there was a significant impact from external quality assurance, including on the teaching and learning situation (Harvey, 2006). The discussion groups at the Forum also indicated that external processes had an impact and that it was mainly positive.

However, there was a general agreement from all these sources that there is no simple causal model of impact. At best there are permeable layers, where actions of external agencies and people within institutions work, alongside other external and internal processes, to filter down to specific practices to change curricula, enhance learning.

However, there is at best a suggestion that the external processes may be involved but little hope of showing a direct link. Furthermore, the implementation, for example, of recommendations is not a simple top-down process but one that involves an iterative process of top-down direction and bottom-up implementation. In addition, recommendations from quality evaluations are rarely written in a form, or with such detail, as to specify appropriate innovations that would directly impact on learning and teaching, or, indeed, research. (The third leg, service to community, was almost totally ignored in the discussions of quality processes).

The agencies in their recent conference had suggested that external quality had an impact because it placed a requirement on institutions to take responsibility for students enrolled, reflected in a growing concern over attrition. There have been demonstrable curriculum adjustments and the growth of course evaluations, appeals and complaints procedures. In addition, agencies claim, standards have improved and there are plenty of examples of better ways of teaching.

The discussion suggested that there is little concrete research on the impact of external quality on either learning or research. There was some agreement that there were possible short-term (positive) impacts on learning through self-evaluation processes, which engender changes in practice. Further, student evaluations, as part of external processes, are not afraid to highlight issues around the teaching-learning interface. However, while there may be an initial response to these, as to weaknesses identified in self-evaluations, the impact may be short-term and dissipate in the interval between evaluations.

What is important, though, is that quality assurance legitimises the discussion of teaching. It makes it acceptable to discuss teaching quality and innovation. No longer is it acceptable to consider teaching as something incontestable, done in private behind closed doors. Having said that, though, it is apparent that in many settings, teaching and learning innovation operate quite independently of quality initiatives. The champions of quality tend to be in central administration and learning innovation in separate learning and teaching units or institutes.

A strong quality culture would ensure that learning and teaching innovation and quality processes both internal and external lock in together. In the end, quality culture is about adopting a self-critical reflexive approach as a community: a community of students and staff. Quality processes, internally and externally, if they are improvement-oriented should provide a framework for the effective operation of communicative learning environment.

8. REFERENCES

Alderman, G. & Brown, R., 2005, Can quality assurance survive the market? Accreditation and audit at the crossroads', *Higher Education Quarterly,* 59, pp. 313-328.

Allaire, Y. & Firsirotu, M. E., 1984, 'Theories of Organizational Culture', *Organization Studies,* 5(3), pp. 193-226.

Amaral, A. & Magalhães, A., 2004, 'Epidemiology and the Bologna Saga', *Higher Education,* 48, pp. 79-100.

Askling, B., 1997, 'Quality Monitoring as an Institutional Enterprise', *Quality in Higher Education,* pp. 17-26.

Association of Dutch Polytechnics and Colleges, 1993, *The sectoral quality assurance project in the Netherlands* (The Hague, Association of Dutch Polytechnics and Colleges).

Barnett, R., 1994, 'Power, Enlightenment and Quality Evaluation', *European Journal of Education,* 29, pp. 165-179.

Bayenet, B., Feola, C. & Tavernier, M., 2000, 'Strategic Management of Universities: Evaluation Policy and Policy Evaluation', *Higher Education Management,* 12(2), pp. 65-80.

Bazarnik J., 2002, 'Kształtowanie jakości usługi edukacyjnej', *Docelowy model kształcenia na Wydziale Zarządzania AE w Krakowie,* conference proceedings (Kraków, Akademia Ekonomiczna w Krakowie).

Becher, T., 1989, *Academic tribes and territories: intellectual enquiry and the culture of disciplines* (Milton Keynes, SRHE/Open University).

Berry, G., 1997, 'Leadership and the development of quality culture in schools', *International Journal of Educational Management,* 11(2).

Berry, L.L., Parasuraman, A. & Zeithaml, V.A., 1988, 'The Service-Quality Puzzle', *Business Horizons,* September-October 1988.

Birnbaum, R., 1988, *How Colleges Work: The Cybernetics of Academic Organization and Leadership* (San Francisco, John Wiley).

Birnbaum, R., 2000, 'The Life Cycle of Academic Management Fads', *The Journal of Higher Education,* 71(1), pp. 1-16.

Blanchard, K. & O'Connor, M., 1998, Zarządzanie poprzez wartości. Wydawnictwo Studio Emka.

Brennan, J.L, Lyon, P.A., McGeevor, P.A. & Murray, K., 1993, *Students courses and jobs. The relationship between higher education and the labour market* (Bristol, Jessica Kingsley Publishers).

Brennan J. & Shah T., 2000, 'Quality assessment and institutional change: Experiences from 14 countries', *Higher Education,* 40, pp. 331-349.

Brennan, J. & Shah, T., 2000, *Managing Quality in Higher Education. An international perspective on institutional assessment and change* (Buckingham, OECD/SRHE/Open University Press).

Cameron, K. S. & Whetten, D. A., 1996, 'Organizational effectiveness and quality: the second generation', in Smart, J. (Ed.) *Higher Education: handbook of theory and research* (New York, Agathon Press).

Chelimsky, E. & Shadish, W.R., (Eds.), *Evaluation for the 21st century. A handbook* (Thousand Oaks, Sage).

Clark, B., 1998, *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities: Organisational pathways of transformation* (Paris, International Association of Universities).

Clark, B., 2004, *Sustaining Change in Universities: Continuities in case studies and concepts,* (Berkshire, England, McGraw-Hill).

Council of Europe Higher Education Forum, The Legitimacy of Quality Assurance in Higher Education: The Role of Public Authorities and Institutions. Conclusions and Recommendations, Strasbourg September 2006. http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/QA/Conclusions%20and%20recommendations_EN.pdf

DA1_CP, 2003, *'DA Self Study Report - Computing Department'.*

Daniel, H.D., Mittag, S. & Bornmann, L., 2003, *Evaluation von Studium und Lehre an Hochschulen. Handbuch zur Durchführung mehrstufiger Evaluationsverfahren.* Münster.

Davies, J., 2004, *Cultural Change in Universities in the Context of Strategic and Quality Initiatives,* European University Association.

Daxner, M., 2004, Vom Nutzen der Hochschulen für die Region, in Verbund Norddeutscher Universitäten (Ed.), *10 Jahre Evaluation von Studium und Lehre von 2004,* Hamburg, pp. 12-14.

Denhardt, R.B. & Denhardt, J., 2000, 'The New Public Service: Serving Rather than Steering', *Public Administration Review'*, 60(6), pp. 1-24.

Detert, J.B., Louis, K.S. & Schroeder, R.G., 2001, 'A Culture Framework for Education: Defining Quality Values and Their Impact in U.S. High Schools', *School Effectiveness and School Improvement,* 12(2).

Dill, D., Teixeira, P., Jongbloed, B. & Amaral, A., 2004, 'Conclusion', in Teixeira, P., Jongbloed, B., Dill, D. & Amaral, A. (eds), *Markets in Higher Education: Rhetoric or Reality?* (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers), pp. 327-352.

Dill, D. & Soo, M., 2004, 'Transparency and Quality in Higher Education Markets', in Teixeira, P., Jongbloed, B., Dill, D. & Amaral, A. (Eds.), *Markets in Higher Education: Rhetoric or Reality?* (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers), pp. 61-85.

Dill, D.D. & Soo, M., 2005, 'Academic Quality, League Tables, and Public Policy: A Cross-National Analysis of University Ranking Systems', *Higher Education,* 49, pp. 495-533.

Enemark, S., 2000, 'Creating a Quality Culture', in *Towards best Practise – Quality Improvement in Nordic Higher Education Institutions* (Copenhagen, Nordic Council of Ministers), pp. 53-63.

EUA – European University Association, 2005, Developing an internal Quality Culture in European Universities. Report on the Quality Culture Project 2002-2003. Brussels.

EUA – European University Association, 2006, Quality Culture in European Universities: A bottom-up approach. Report on the three rounds of the Quality Culture project 2002-2006. Brussels.

Fetterman, D.M., 2001, *Foundations of Empowerment Evaluation* (Sage, Thousand Oaks).

Figuera, P., 1996, *La inserción del universitario en el mercado de trabajo* (Barcelona, EUB).

Figuera, P. & Vivas, J., 2000, *De l'educació superior al treball* (Barcelona, AQU Catalunya).

Freed, J.E., Klugman, M.R. & Fife, J.D., 1997, *A Culture for Academic Excellence. Implementing the Quality Principles in Higher Education* (Washington, The George Washington University).

Froschauer, U., 1997, 'Organisationskultur als soziale Konstruktion', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie,* Vol. 1997(2), pp. 107-124.

Garden, G. I. & Partington, P., 1993, *Quality in higher education: overview and update.* USDU Briefing Paper Three.

Geerz, C., 1993, *The Interpretation of Cultures,* London.

Government of Ireland, 1999, *Qualifications Act.*

Green, D., 1994, 'What is quality in higher education? concepts, policy and practice', in Green, D. (Ed.), 1994, *What is quality in higher education* (Buckingham, SRHE/OU Press).

Grönroos, C., 1984, 'A service quality model and its marketing implications', *European Journal of Marketing,* 4.

Gummesson, E., 1993, Quality Management in Service Organisations, ISQA.

Hackman, R.J. & Wageman, R., 1995, 'Total quality management, conceptual and practical issues', *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 40, pp. 309-342.

Halsey, A.H., 1992, *Decline of Donnish Dominion: The British Academic Professions in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, Claredon Press).

Harvey, L., Green, D., 1993, *Defining Quality, Assessment and evaluation in higher education,* 18 (1), pp. 9-34.

Harvey, L. & Knight, P., 1996, *Transforming Higher Education* (Ballmoor, SHRE/Open University Press).

Harvey, L. & Newton, J., 2004, *'Transforming quality evaluation', Quality in higher education,* 10(2).

Harvey, L. & Newton, J., 2005, 'Transforming quality evaluation: moving on', paper presented to the seminar *'Dynamics and effects of quality assurance in higher education – various perspectives of quality and performance at various levels',* Douro, October 2005.

Harvey, L., 2004, 'The power of accreditation: views of academics', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management,* 26(2), pp. 207–23.

Harvey, L., 2006, 'Impact of Quality Assurance: Overview of a discussion between representatives of external quality assurance agencies', *Quality in Higher Education,* 12(3), p. 287.

Harvey, L., 2006, Understanding quality, *EUA Bologna Handbook* (Brussels, European University Association).

Henkel, M., 2000, *Academic identities and policy change in higher education.* Higher Education Policy Series 46 (London, Jessica Kingsley).

Henkel, M., 2004, *'The demise of a dominant culture? Higher education institutions in transition',* Learning and Teaching in the Social Sciences, 1(1), pp. 21-32.

HEQC, 1994, *Learning from audit* (London, Higher Education Quality Council).

Hermann, B., 1997, Effizienzsteigerung in der Hochschule. Arbeitspapiere zu Hochschulfragen und Hochschulcontrolling, Nr. 2, Kaiserslautern.

HETAC, 2002, *'Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures'.* Higher Education and Training Awards Council', www.hetac.ie

HETAC, 2004a, *'Criteria and Procedures for the Delegation and Review of Delegation of Authority to Make Awards',* Higher Education and Training Awards Council, www.hetac.ie

HETAC , 2004b, *'Report of the Evaluation Group on the application for Delegated Authority to Make Awards by Institute of Technology Tralee',* Higher Education and Training Awards Council, www.hetac.ie

Hodgkinson, C., 1983, *The Philosophy of Leadership* (Oxford, Blackwell).

Hodson, P. & Thomas, H., 2003, 'Quality assurance in Higher Education: Fit for the

new millennium or simply year 2000 compliant?', *Higher Education,* 45, pp. 375 – 387.

Hoecht, A., 2006, 'Quality assurance in UK higher education: Issues of trust, control,

professional autonomy and accountability', *Higher Education,* 51, pp. 541-563.

Hofstede, G., 2000, *Kultury i organizacje* (Warszawa, Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne).

Horsburgh, M., 1999, 'Quality monitoring in higher education: the impact on student learning', *Quality in higher education.* (5)1, pp 9 – 26.

ITT, 2000, *'Strategic Plan 2000-2006',* Institute of Technology, Tralee.

ITT, 2001a, *'School of Science and Computing Programmatic Review- Report of the External Peer Review Panel'*, Institute of Technology, Tralee.

ITT, 2001b, *'School of Science and Computing Self Study Report'*, Institute of Technology, Tralee.

ITT, 2002, *'Strategic Plan 2000-2006 Progress Report October 2002'*.

ITT, 2003, *'Strategic Plan 2000-2006 Progress Report December 2003'*.

ITT, 2004a, *'Institute of Technology Tralee - Delegated Authority Submission'*, Institute of Technology, Tralee.

ITT, 2004b, *'Quality Assurance Manual'*, Institute of Technology, Tralee.

ITT, 2004c, *'Strategic Plan 2004-2007'*, Institute of Technology, Tralee.

ITT , 2005, *'School of Science and Computing Programmatic Review- Report of the External Peer Review Panel'*, Institute of Technology, Tralee.

Jongbloed, B., 2003, 'Marketisation in *Higher Education: Clark's Triangle and the Essential Ingredients of Markets', Higher Education Quarterly,* 57(2), pp. 110–135.

Knight, J., 2002, *Trade in Higher Education Services: the Implications of GATS* (London, The Observatory on borderless higher education).

Kogan, M., 1989, *Evaluating higher education.* Higher education policy Series 6 (London, Jessica Kingsley).

Kogan, M., Bauer, M., Bleilie, I. & Henkel, M., 2000, *Transforming Higher Education. A Comparative Study* (London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers).

Kokosalakis, N., 1998, *Non-official Higher Education in the European Union* (Athens, Centre for Social Morphology and Social Policy).

Konecki, K., 2000, *Studia z metodologii badań jakościowych. Teoria ugruntowana* (Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN).

Kostera, M., 2003, *Antropologia organizacji. Metodologia badań terenowych* (Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN).

Laske S., Meister-Scheytt, C. & Weiskopf, R., 2000, Qualitäten der Qualität in Universitäten, in Laske, S., Habersam, M. & Kappler, E. (Eds.) *Qualitätsentwicklung in Universitäten,* Konzepte, Prozesse, Wirkungen. Schriften zur Universitätsentwicklung Vol. 2. (München und Mering, Rainer Hampp Verlag), pp. 177 – 201.

Leja, K., 2003, Instytucja akademicka. Strategia, efektywność, jakość (Gdańsk, Wydawnictwo Gdańskie Sp. z o.o).

Lillis, D., 2006a, *Bar-raising or navel gazing? The effectiveness of self study programs in leading to improvements in institutional performance* (Rome, European Association of Institutional Researchers).

Lillis, D., 2006b, *'The Systematic Evaluation of a Strategic Planning program in a Higher Education Institute'.* Tertiary Education and Management (accepted pending publication).

Lillis, D. & Thorn, R., 2006, *'The development of an integrated planning and evaluation framework for the Irish Institutes of Technology',* Department of Education & Science Technological Sector Research : Strand 1. Postgraduate R&D Skills programme.

Luhmann, N., 1997, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft. Zweiter Teilband* (Frankfurt a Main, Suhrkamp).

MacLeod-Brudenell, T., 2003, *Are there too many graduates? A literature review and analysis of graduate employability,* Centre for Research and Evaluation Sheffield Hallam University. http://www.shu.ac. uk/research/cre/

Martin, A., Milne-Home, J., Barrett, J., Spalding, E. & Jones, G., 2000, 'Graduate Satisfaction with University and Perceived Employment Preparation', *Journal of Education and Work,* 13 (2), pp. 199-213.

Massy, W., 1999, *Energizing quality work. Higher education quality evaluation in Sweden and Denmark* (Stanford University. Stanford, National Center for Postsecondary Improvement).

Massy, W.F., 2004a, Markets in Higher Education: Do they promote internal efficiency?, in Teixeira, P., Jongbloed, B., Dill, D. & Amaral, A. (Eds.), *Markets in Higher Education: Rhetoric or Reality?* (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers), pp. 13-35.

Massy, W.F., 2004b, 'Collegium Economicum: Why Institutions Do What They Do?', *Change*, 36(4), pp. 26-35.

Mau, W.C. & Kopischke, A., 2001, 'Job search methods, job search outcomes, and job satisfaction of college graduates: a comparison of race and sex', *Journal of employment counselling,* 38, pp. 141-149.

McConville, G., 1999, 'Everybody wants quality education: but what does it mean?' *Australian universities review,* 42(2), pp. 2-4.

Meek, L., 2002, 'On the road to mediocrity? Governance and management of Australian higher education in the market place', In Alberto Amaral, Glen A.J. & Berit K. (Eds.), *Governing Higher Education: National Perspectives on Institutional Governance* (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers), pp. 235-260.

Mintzberg, H., 1998, 'The Structuring of Organisations', in *Readings in the Strategy Process,* Prentice-Hall.

Mittag, S., 2006, Qualitätssicherung an Hochschulen – eine Untersuchung zu den Folgen der Evaluation von Studium und Lehre, Münster.

Neave, G., 1986, 'The all-seeing eye of the Prince in Western Europe', in Moodie, G.C. (Ed.) *Standards and criteria in higher education* (Guildford, SRHE/NFER/Nelson), pp. 157 -170.

Neave, G., 1988, 'On the Cultivation of Quality, Efficiency and Enterprise: An overview of recent trends in higher education in Western Europe', *European Journal of Education,* 23, pp. 7-23.

Neave, G., 1996, 'On looking both ways at once: scrutinies of the private life of higher education', in Maassen, P. A. M. & van Vught F.A. (Eds.) *Inside academia. New challenges for the academic profession* (Utrecht, De Tijdstroom).

Newton, J., 1997, 'Institutional self-evaluation: responding to the challenge of external quality monitoring in a higher education institution in Wales', in Strydom, A.H., Lategan, L.O.K. & Muller, A. (Eds.), 1997, *Enhancing institutional self-evaluation in quality in South African higher education: national and international perspectives* (Bloemfontein, University of the Orange Free State).

Newton, J., 1999, 'Implementing quality assurance policy in a higher education college: exploring the tension between the views of 'managers' and 'managed'', in Fourie, M. et al. (Eds.), *Reconstructing quality assurance: programme assessment and accreditation* (Bloemfontein, University of the Free State Press).

Newton, J., 2000, 'Feeding the beast or improving quality?: academics perceptions of quality assurance and quality monitoring', *Quality in higher education,* 6 (2), pp. 153 -162.

Newton, J., 2002, 'Views from below: academics coping with quality', *Quality in higher education,* 8(1), pp. 39 - 61.

Newton, J., 2002, *From policy to reality: enhancing quality is a messy business.* LTSN Generic Centre/The learning and teaching support network, (www.ltsn.ac.ukgenericcentre/projects/qaa/enhancement)

Ostaszewska, A., 2004, 'Implikacje rynkowego podejścia do edukacji dla interpretacji jakości kształcenia w szkolnictwie wyższym', In Nowaczyk, G. & Kolasiński, M. (Eds.), *Marketing Szkół Wyższych* (Poznań, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Bankowej w Poznaniu).

O'Sullivan G., 2001, Elastyczny system studiów i ECTS jako systemy sprzyjające podnoszeniu jakości kształcenia, in Jankowski, K., Sitarska, B., Tkaczuk, C., Daniluk, A. & Skrzyp, J. (Eds.), *Jakość kształcenia w szkole wyższej – dążenie do doskonałości* (Siedlce, Wydawnictwo Akademii Podlaskiej).

Owlia M.S. & Aspinwall E.M., 1996, 'A framework for the dimensions of quality in higher education', *Quality Assurance in Education,* 4(2).

PA Consulting, 2000, *Better accountability for higher education.* Higher Education Funding Council for England, report 00/36, London.

PartnershipIT, 2005, *'Designing and implementing a Performance Management and Development System for the Institutes of Technology Sector'*, National Partnership Forum - Institutes of Technology.

Patton M.Q., 2002, Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods. 3rd edition, (Thousand Oaks, Sage).

Peters T. J. & Waterman R.H., 1984, *In search of excellence.* Lessons from

America's best-run companies (New York, Harper & Row).

PR1, 2001, *'School of Science and Computing Programmatic Review- Report of the External Peer Review Panel'.*

PR2 (2005). *'School of Science and Computing Self Study Report',* PR2_Science_Self Study report.pdf.

Reed, M., 2002, 'New managerialism, professional power and organisational governance in UK universities: a review and assessment', in Amaral, A., Jones, G.A. & Karseth, B. (Eds.) *Governing Higher Education: National Perspectives on Institutional Governance* (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers), pp. 163-186.

Reeves, C.A. & Bednar, D.A., 1994, 'Defining quality: Alternatives and implications', *Academy of Management Review,* 19, pp. 419-445.

Rodríguez Espinar, S (Coord), 2005, *Educació superior i treball: estudi de la inserció laboral dels graduats de les universitats públiques catalanes.* Barcelona: AQU Catalunya http://www.aqucatalunya.org/uploads/ publicacions/arxiu%20pdf/EducacioSuperiorTreball_cat.pdf

Rokeach, M., 1968, *Beliefs, Attitudes and Values* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass).

Rossi, P., Lipsey, M. & Freeman, H., 2003, *Evaluation - A systematic approach,* Sage Publications.

Ryan, Y., 2002, *Emerging Indicators of Success and Failure in Borderless Higher Education,* (London, The Observatory on borderless higher education).

Salmi, J., 2001, 'Tertiary Education in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities', *Higher Education Management,* 13(2), OECD.

Santos, S.M., Introduction to the Theme of Transnational Education, Conference of The Directors General for Higher Education and the Heads of the Rectors' Conferences of the European Union. Aveiro, 03 April 2000.

Sappington, D.E.M., 1991, 'Incentives in Principal-Agent Relationship', *Journal of Economic Perspectives.* 5(2), 45–66.

Sathe, V., 1983, 'Implications of Corporate Culture', *Organizational Dynamics,* 12.

Schein, E.H., 1984, 'Coming to a New Awareness of Organizational Culture', *Sloan -Management Review,* 2.

Schein, E.H., 2004, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3rd edition (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass).

Schnell R. & Kopp J., 2000, Theoretische und methodische Diskussionen der Lehrevaluationsforschung und deren praktische Bedeutung. Forschungsbericht.

Schott, D., 'Netzwerkevaluation – Bericht zur gleichnamigen Tagung in Köln', in *Zeitschrift für Evaluation* 1/2005, pp. 137-145.

Schultz, M. & Hatch, M.J., 1996, Living with multiple paradigms: the case of paradigm interplay in organizational culture studies, *Academy of Management Review,* 21(2).

Schwarz, S. & Westerheijden, D.F. (Eds.), 2004, *Accreditation and evaluation in the European higher education area* (Dorndrecht, Kluwer academic publishers).

Scott, P., 1989, 'The Power of Ideas', in Ball, C. & H. Eggins (Eds.). *Higher Education into the 1990s: New Dimensions* (Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press), pp. 7-16.

Scott, P., 1994, 'Recent developments in quality assessment in GB', in Westerheijden, D.F., Brennan, J., and Maasen, P. (Eds.), *Changing contexts of quality assessment: recent trends in West European higher education* (Netherlands, CHEPS).

Shattock, M., 2002, 'Re-balancing Modern Concepts of University Governance', *Higher Education Quarterly,* 56, 3, pp. 235-244.

Shaw I., 1999, *Qualitative Evaluation* (London, Sage).

Shore, C. & Wright, S., 2000, 'Coercive accountability: the rise of audit culture in higher education', in Strathem, M. (Ed.) *Audit cultures* (London, Routledge).

Sikorski, Cz., 2000, Wolność w organizacji. Humanistyczna utopia czy prakseologiczna norma? Kluczbork-Łódź: Wydawnictwo 'Antykwa'.

Simon, H., 1999, Tajemniczy mistrzowie. Studia przypadków. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Sizer, J., 1990, Funding Councils and Performance Indicators in Quality Assessment in the United Kingdom, in Goedegebuure, L.C.J., Maassen, P.A.M. & Westerheijden, D.F., (Eds.), *Peer Review and Performance Indicators – Quality Assessment in British and Dutch Higher Education* (Utrecht, Lemma).

Slaughter, S. & Leslie, L., 1999, *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies and the Entrepreneurial University* (Baltimore, John Hopkins Press).

Smircich, L., 1983, 'Organizations as Shared Meanings', in Pondy, L.R., Frost, P.J., Morgan, G. & Dandridge T.C. (Eds.), *Organizational Symbolism* (Greenwich, Jai Press), pp. 55-65.

Smircich, L., 1985, 'Is the Concept of Culture a Paradigm for Understanding Organizations and Ourselves?', in: Frost, P.J., Moore, 1985, L.F., Reis L.M., Lundberg C.C. & Martin J. (Eds.), Organizational Culture (Newbury Park, Sage), pp. 55-72.

Smith, M.F., 1989, *Evaluability Assessment: A Practical Approach,* Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Smyth, J., 1995, *Academic work: the changing labour process in higher education* (Buckingham, SRHE/OU Press).

Stensaker B. & Norgard J.D., 2001, 'Innovation and isomorphism: A case study of university identity struggle 1969 – 1999', *Higher Education,* 42, pp. 473 -492.

Stensaker, B., 1999, In Charge? (Absent) Academic Leadership During External Assessments. *International Journal of Educational Management,* 13, pp. 266-271.

Stensaker, B., 2003, 'Trance, transparency and transformation: the impact of external quality monitoring in higher education', *Quality in Higher Education,* 9, pp. 151-159.

Stensaker, B. & Harvey, L., 2006, 'Old wine in new bottles? A comparison of public and private accreditation schemes in higher education', *Higher Education Policy,* 19, pp. 65-85.

Stensaker, B., 2006, 'Governmental policy, organisational ideals, and institutional adaptation in Norwegian higher education', *Studies in Higher Education,* 31, pp. 43-56.

Stensaker, B., 2007a, Quality as Fashion. Exploring the translation of a management idea into higher education. Westerheijden, D.F., Stensaker, B. & Rosa, M. (Eds.), *Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (Dorndrecht, Springer).

Stensaker, B., 2007b, The relationship between branding and organisational change, *Higher Education Management and Policy* (forthcoming)

Stensaker, 2007, 'Impact of quality processes', *Embedding Quality Culture in Higher Education,* EUA Case Studies, pp. 59-62.

Sursock, A., 2004, 'Qualitätskultur und Qualitätsmanagement', in: Benz, W. et al. (Hg.), Handbuch Qualität in Studium und Lehre (Berlin, Raabe Verlag, Griffmarke C 2.2).

Tabatoni, P., Davies, J. & Barblan, A., 2004, *Strategic Management and Universities Institutional Development,* European University Association.

Teichler, U., 1997, Changes in the transition from higher education to employment in Europe. Jornadas de Reflexión: Retos presentes y futuros de la universidad. Valencia, 16 y 17 de septiembre. Organización: Consejo de Universidades, Instituto Valenciano de Investigaciones Económicas.

Thune, C., 1996, The Alliance of Accountability and Improvement: the Danish experience, *Quality in Higher Education,* 2, pp. 21-32.

Thys-Clement, F. & Wilkin, L., 1998, 'Strategic Management and Universities: Outcomes of a European Survey', *Higher Education Management,* 10(1), pp. 13-28.

Trow, M., 1994, *Managerialism and the academic profession: quality and control.* Higher Education Report No. 2 (London, Quality Support Centre).

Trow, M., 1996, 'Trust, Markets and Accountability in Higher Education: a Comparative Perspective', *Higher Education Policy,* 9 (4), pp. 309-324.

Trowler, P., 1998, *Academics responding to change: new higher education frameworks and academic cultures* (Buckingham, SRHE/OU Press).

Van Vught, F.A. & Westerheijden, D., 1994, 'Towards a General Model of Quality Assessment in Higher Education', *Higher Education*, 3, pp. 355-371.

Van Vught, F. & Westerheijden, D. F., 1995, *'Quality Measurement and Quality Assurance in European Higher Education'*, in *Quality Improvement in European Public Services* (Ed. Bouckaert, P.) (London, Sage Publications).

Van Vught, F.A., 1994, 'Intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of quality assessment in higher education', in Westerheijden, D., Brennan, J. & Maassen, P. (Eds.), *Changing contexts of quality assessment. Recent trends in west European higher education: Vol.20. Management and policy in higher education* (Ultrecht: Uitgeverij LEMMA B.V.), pp. 31-50.

Veiga, A. & Amaral, A., 2006, 'The Open Method of Coordination and the Implementation of the Bologna Process', *Tertiaty Education Mangement,* 12(4), pp. 283-295.

Vermeulen, W., 1997, Cultural change: crucial for the implementation of TQM. *Training for Quality,* 5(1).

Vroeijenstijn, A.I., 1995, *Improvement and Accountability, Navigating Between Scylla and Charybdis, Guide for Quality Assessment in Higher Education,* (London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers).

Webb, A., 1994, 'Two tales from a reluctant manager', in Weil, S. (Ed.) *Introducing change from the top in universities and colleges: 10 personal accounts* (London, Kogan Page).

Weick, K.E., 1994, 'Organizational Culture al a Source of High Reliability', in Tsoukas, Haridimos (Ed.) New Thinking in Organizational Behaviour (Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann), pp. 147-162.

Westerheijden, D.F., 1999, 'Where are the quantum jumps in quality assurance? development of a decade of research on a heavy particle', *Higher education,* 38(2), pp. 233-254.

Westerheijden, D.F., 2001, 'Ex oriente lux?: national and multiple accreditation in Europe after the fall of the Wall and after Bologna', *Quality in Higher Education,* 7, pp. 65-75.

Westerheijen, D.F., Hulpiau, V. & Waeytens, K., 2006, *ines of change in the discourse of quality assurance. An overview of some studies into what impacts improvements.* Paper presented to the 28th annual EAIR Forum, Rome 30th September – 1st September.

Westerheijden, D.F., Stensaker, B. & Rosa, M.(Es.) , 2007, *Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (Dorndrecht, Springer).

Whittington, R., 1993, *What is strategy and does it matter?* (New York, Routledge).

Williams, G., 1996, Taking up the HEFCW challenge, in Haylett, R.P.T & Gregory, K.J. *Departmental review in higher education.* Conference proceedings, Goldsmiths College, University of London, in association with IBM, 20 March 1996.

9. PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE 1ST EUROPEAN FORUM FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AT THE TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT MÜNCHEN

In addition to the papers printed in this publication the following contributions were presented during the track sessions of the 1st European Forum for Quality Assurance, hosted by the Technische Universität München from 23 – 25 November 2006. Electronic versions of these papers can be found on the EFQA website.

Quality culture in higher education: general considerations

Anninos, Loukas N., University of Piraeus, Greece
Quality and culture in higher education

Atanasiu, Gabriela M., Gh. Asachi Technical University of Iasi, Romania
Quality - a change generator for higher education

Ilger, Sabine, Anna Koubek, Gudrun Posch-Frisee, FH JOANNEUM, Austria
Quality assurance in universities of applied sciences – linking higher education with company structures

Mattisen, Heli and Birgit Kuldvee, Tallinn University, Estonia
Quality assurance vs. quality management: last changes in Estonian higher education

Short, Angela C., Dundalk Institute of Technology, Ireland
Bureaucracy – the enemy of a quality culture

Vardar, Öktem, Işik University, Turkey
Linking quality management with mission and strategy

Institutional case studies

Bettencourt, Beatriz, Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal
The introduction of a quality assurance culture and the adoption of a self-regulation policy at the University of Lisbon

Bokeria, Ivane and Nino Chikhladze, Tbilisi State University, Georgia
New paradigm of higher medical education in the mirror of quality assurance

Dika, Zamir and Bistra Netkova, South East European University, FYROM
Quality assurance, theoretical implications, and practical implementation: quality versus standards in the case of SEEU

Dosbergs, Dainis, University of Latvia, Latvia
How to evaluate study program quality

Gögele, Sonja, Jutta Pauschenwein and Irmgard Schinnerl, FH JOANNEUM, Austria
Quality management in e-learning at FH JOANNEUM

Grau Vidal, Francesc Xavier and Sara Gimeno Vila, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Spain
The URV research and academic staff commitment agreement

Hodgson, Kath, University of Leeds, United Kingdom
From quality assurance to quality enhancement

Hutyra, Milan, VSB – Technical University of Ostrava, Czech Republic
Implementation of quality management system according to ISO 9001 at VSB-Technical University of Ostrava

Keravnou-Papailiou, Elpida, University of Cyprus, Cyprus
The development of an internal quality assurance policy for research at the University of Cyprus

Krogstrup, Hanne Kathrine, Aalborg University, Denmark
Embedding internal quality processes in higher education

Kuiper, Alison, Lincoln University, New Zealand
Issues in the protection of academic standards: assuring quality assurance in assessment

Mayer, George and Andrey Babenko, Tomsk State University, Russia
Quality management at Tomsk State University: key processes and documentation

Pistor, Petra, Karl-Heinz Stammen and Michael Kerres, University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany
Central or decentral? Tailored solutions for course evaluation as a tool for quality development

Schweizer, Karl, Jürgen Bereiter-Hahn and Andreas Gold, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University, Germany
Structure-focused evaluation at the level of departments: the Frankfurt Model

Tucci, Mario and Luca Cellesi, Università degli Studi di Firenze, Italy
Higher education quality in Florence University: first analysis of a self assessment model implementation

Younes, Nathalie, Université d'Auvergne, France
Effects of implementing an internal teaching quality evaluation process: a case study at the Technological Institute of the Université d'Auvergne, France

Wülbern, Kai, Technische Universität München, Germany
HIS@TUM - quality assurance in campus management at the Technische Universität München (TUM)

National approaches

Craik, Robert J.M. and Margaret King, Heriot-Watt University, United Kingdom
The role of students in quality assurance

Cullen, Peter J., Higher Education and Training Awards Council Ireland, Ireland
Quality culture in research training outside of traditional research-intensive university systems: a QA agency perspective

Davidson, Alan, University of Dundee, United Kingdom
The Scottish higher education sector and general approach to quality

Hendriks, Birger, Ministry of Science, Economy and Transport, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany
Quality assurance - the German situation

van Heyningen, Simon, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom
An institutional viewpoint: quality assurance and internal review in a university

Walsh, Padraig and Teresa Lee, Irish Universities Quality Board, Ireland
Quality improvement in the Irish university sector through the implementation of recommendations arising from quality assurance reviews in individual Irish universities: a model for partnership between quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions

Student participation in quality processes

Brus, Sanja, ESIB, Slovenia
Student participation in external quality assurance in Slovenia

Gibbs, Andy and Christina Ashton, Napier University, United Kingdom
Student involvement in university life and quality processes

Gibbs, Andy and Christina Ashton, Napier University, United Kingdom
Addressing student retention and progression

External and internal QA

Aas, Gro Hanne and Jon Haakstad, NOKUT, Norway
External audits as 'special events' in internal quality assurance processes?

Crozier, Fiona, QAA, United Kingdom
Internal QA in an external audit culture

Danø, Trine and Bjørn Stensaker, EVA, Denmark and NIFU STEP, Norway
Still balancing improvement and accountability? Developments in external quality assurance in the Nordic countries 1996-2006

Frederiks, Mark, NVAO, Netherlands
Internal quality assurance as condition for external assessments with less stress

Haakstad, Jon, NOKUT, Norway
The legitimacy and limitations of external quality assurance as seen in relation to internal quality work

Signe Ploug Hansen and Pål Bakken, EVA, Denmark and NOKUT, Norway
European Standards and Guidelines in a Nordic perspective

Ihsen, Susanne et al., Technische Universität München, Germany
Gender and diversity as structural components of quality in new (engineering) study programs

Maurer, Stephanie, OAQ, Switzerland
Quality audits in Switzerland

Rebora, Gianfranco and Matteo Turri, University Cattaneo, Italy
The effects of quality assurance in universities: empirical evidences from three cases

Selesho, Jacob, Central University Technology, South Africa
Institutional program accreditation as a force for change in South African higher education institutions

Wolff, Klaus Dieter, University of Bayreuth, Germany
Developing the institutional process quality – the process accreditation approach

The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 46 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations EUA ensures that the independent voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact on their activities.

The Association provides a unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, website and publications.