HE & Quality: Expectations, Quality Standards & Tools

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EURASHE – European Association of Institutes in Higher Education

- Founded in 1990 to represent professionally oriented sector of higher education in Europe

- Members of EURASHE are:
  - national associations of higher education institutions
  - individual higher education institutions
  - professional associations & networks
  - stakeholder organisations in HE

- More than 700 members in over 30 countries in the EHEA and associate members in partner countries

- Represents Professional Higher Education within the Bologna Process

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EURASHE – European Association of Institutes in Higher Education

- **Focus on Quality in Higher Education:**

- In the Bologna Process: member of 'E 4'; contributes to ESG, EQAR, EQAF

- Towards our members (professionally oriented programmes & institutions):

  through our seminars & workshops, statements in public fora, publications

- Involvement in EU projects: initiatives in Central Asia, 'mapping implementation of ESG'

- Participation in quality reviews of ENQA, EUA outside Europe

- **The advent of the 'transparency tools': did something change ?**

* Advisory Board of CEIHE & U-Map projects; Stakeholder Group of AHELO project (OECD);

Why this need for transparency tools ?

- A general trend towards instruments, benchmarks, classification, actual performance… to complement theoretical appraches

- Balance between input from stakeholders and 'professionals'

- Call for transparency, clarity, general overview

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A European or a global need?

- Examples that attract and/or repel, depending on the viewer (Shanghai, CHE, commercial & media initiatives)

- Are we missing out things or lagging behind developments in other regions ?

- What is the purpose of excellence, diversity, if not visible?

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What should be our attitude towards 'transparency tools'?

- We should only accept factual, empirical evidence of 'good' and 'bad' practice in their use
- Must be truly multidimensional: are we happy with the 'dimensions' identified in existing models?
- See how they fit within a broader context (classification, ranking)
- Must be aware that they will be used for making classifications. Therefore not avoid the debate of classifications either.
- Studies of impact of existing classifcations/rankings? What are implied risks and assumptions ?
- Further considerations: ownership, updates, check against QA measures.

A risks analysis of transparency tools

- Creates a status difference among HEIs, which is based on perceptions, rather than on 'findings'
- Impact on HE (mission statement, profile, targets, relation towards students) unknown
- Indicators may be used independently from their original (justifiable?) objective, and become exclusive
- Risk of missing indicators: what is not described does not exist?
- QA & its processes have no place in this; indicators have not (yet) been checked against them

The starting point: who is the user? what is the purpose?

- We must distinguish between:
- Need for communication (also on Q & QA issues): for students, employers, broader public
- A strategy of HE institutions: promotion of varying profiles & programmes
- A concern for Quality in HE, through assessment of programmes & their providers

Need for communication on QA & Accreditation

- **QA portal** to explain how the different bodies involved in QA on a European level relate to each other, what information they contain: forms of external accreditation, by national agencies, by the universities themselves.

- Explain basic proceedings like e.g. accredited programme leads to a degree that is ascertained by a QA process.

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Strategies of HE institutions: promotion of varying profiles

- Diversity of HEIs now considered an asset by all stakeholders (a 'European dimension')

- A comprehensive HE system, which respects different national & cultural contexts

- A market for higher education, where providers & users meet, needs promotion tools

- HEIs looking for partners for cooperation, next to identifying their competitive position

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Accountability of HEIs, in terms of Quality & QA

- Institutional autonomy: an attainment largely due to QA processes

- Impact of stakeholders influences state of autonomy/dependency of a HEI (profess-ional HE > under such influence than research universities ?)

- QA processes reflect this

Some reflections

- Who does what? Actors should stick to their different roles (Information providers; policy makers; stakeholders like students, HEIs, employers; controllers and guardians of Quality)

- Tools for transparency and measures of quality have a mutual impact now; important to distinguish different objectives

Conclusions

- Consider effects of systemic implementation
- Co-ordination of development within entire educational systems developments
- Balancing stakeholders' expectations (students, employers & labour market, society, …) – understanding motives
- Sharing, learning, inspiring

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Thank you!

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