

Consolidating a quality culture in European universities?

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Quality issues at the heart of the Bologna process

- § Bologna reforms are meant to promote transparency and the attractiveness of Europe
- § Implementation of Bologna in higher education institutions requires close internal monitoring

Quality in European universities

- § What is quality?
- § What is quality culture?

Current QA landscape

(Sources: Trends III, ENQA 2003 survey)

- § Almost all countries in Europe have a QA agency or external QA procedures in place
- § In more than 50 per cent of Bologna signatory countries, HE funding is based on QA of teaching and research
- § Emerging use of standards and criteria, and accreditation procedures

The multiplication of QA procedures

- **Programme accreditation (56 per cent)**
- Programme evaluation (52 per cent)
- Subject evaluation (14 per cent)
- **Institutional audit (28 per cent)**
- Institutional evaluation (22 per cent)
- Institutional accreditation (22 per cent)
- **Programme benchmarking (14 per cent)**
- Subject benchmarking (8 per cent)
- **Plus, research evaluation**

Costs and impact of a European evaluation system?

- § How many peers would we need if all programmes were evaluated/accredited?
- § What are the financial costs of a focus on programme evaluations/accreditations?
- § Is the return on investment appropriate?
- § Does quality of education, teaching and research really improve when evaluations are done in a piecemeal manner instead of looking at the whole institution?
- § What will be the long-term impact of the use of standards on innovation, creativity and diversity?

EUA's goals:

- § To strengthen universities' capacity to monitor their quality internally
- § To promote institutional audits and good practice in programme evaluations
- § To develop a European perspective, i.e., to create transparency for mutual recognition

EUA's Institutional Evaluations

- § Since 1993

- § Over 80 universities in 30 countries

- § Institutional approach focused on developing the capacity for each universities for their own:

 - § Internal quality management

 - § Strategic management

EUA's Institutional Evaluations: Philosophy

- § Fitness for purpose, taking into account the national and institutional context
- § Emphasis on the self-evaluation phase as a formative step
- § Mutual learning: peer evaluation in a supportive yet critical context
- § Improvement orientation
- § Add to national perspective (i.e., fitness for purpose) a European dimension (i.e., “relative accreditation”)

Taking our medicine

§ 2002 External evaluation of the programme:
recommendations are now being implemented

EUA's Institutional Evaluations: Impact

- § A turning point for many universities which use the opportunity to develop:
 - § An internal quality culture
 - § Strategic planning
 - § Bring about positive change
 - § A reflection of the leadership and responsibility structure of the university

Quality Culture Project

§ Fifty institutions

§ 29 countries representing the full spectrum of EUA membership

§ 6 networks working on different themes

Quality Culture Project: Method

- § Mutual learning within the networks
- § Involvement of each institution which was asked to develop:
 - § A SWOT analysis
 - § An action plan

Outcomes: Identifying success factors

- § Importance of institutional governance and leadership (vs. management) for an effective quality culture;
- § Importance of strategic thinking
- § Institutional autonomy as a determining factor for an effective internal quality culture

Conclusion of the EUA's survey:

§ 82 per cent of institutions have internal quality monitoring of teaching

§ 53 per cent of institutions have internal quality monitoring of research

§ 48 per cent of institutions want to see the development of QA at European level for mutual recognition and transparency

Conclusion

Quality issues will be the focus of discussions in Graz in almost all the working groups.

It is a unique opportunity to:

- § Empower universities to better at monitoring internally their quality
- § Contribute as a university community to trustworthy external QA procedures, in Europe, that respect the need for diversity, creativity, innovation and autonomy on the one hand and mutual recognition on the other hand.