Quality assurance in higher education: where do we go from here?

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• Increase **conformity** in European higher education

• Two „**main cycles“** of degrees

• System of **credits** (ECTS)

• Promote **mobility** (students & staff)

• Promote **European cooperation in QA** (accreditation processes)
Causa higher education

- **Communities** dedicated to the learning and personal development of their members, especially students
- **Sources of expertise** and vocational identity
- **Creators, testers, and sites** for the evaluation and application of new knowledge
- **Contributors to society and nations**

Watson et al. (2011, 1-28)
What *else* is higher education?

- **Repositories and generators of knowledge**
- **Equips graduates for employment**
- **Offers rational and timely criticism** in public policy, social and economic life
- **Remains large and influential bodies** in civil society and the state
- **Creates graduates** for cohesive and tolerant communities
Kinds of institution

- Organized anarchy
  (Cohen, March & Olsen, 1972)
  No goals, goals alongside each other

- Loosely-coupled system
  (Weick, 1976)
  Some parts good, others less so

- Professional bureaucracy
  (Mintzberg, 1983)
  Academic hierarchies, little middle management

entrepreneurial

supercomplex
What is quality?

„Quality in higher education is a bit like love: not tangible, yet present. You can experience it, yet not quantify it. It remains fleeting, so you have to consistently and repeatedly engage with it.“

Müller-Böling, 1997, 90, own translation
Quality: DIN EN ISO 9000FF (2005, p.18)

Degree in which a set of inherent properties meet requirements

= poor, good or excellent

In contrast with 'being applied to', *inherent* signifies being permanently part of, in particular as a *constant characteristic*.

Quality management includes politics, goals, planning, direction, assurance and improvement.

(DIN EN ISO 9000:2005, p.21)
So that makes management easy, right?

We are *engaging with*

a) something we can’t *really* determine, but yet know it’s there;

b) a *moving* target;

c) fluctuating leaders;

d) and changing legislation.
European regulation in quality assurance

Established 2000 for European cooperation in QA

- to **represent its members** at the European level and internationally, especially in political decision making processes and in co-operations with stakeholder organisations;

- to **function as a think tank for developing quality assurance** processes and systems further in the EHEA, and beyond;

- to **function as a communication platform** for sharing and disseminating information and expertise in quality assurance among members and other interested parties, and towards stakeholders.
Areas of focus in HE

- Learning
- Leadership
- Research
- Competence
- Communication
- Metrics/rankings
- Administration
- Internationalisation
- Strategy

Quality?
Rankings

**International:**

![Academic Ranking of World Universities]

![Times Higher Education Rankings]

![U-Multirank]

**National, e.g. Germany:**

![CHE Ranking]
Models of QM

European Foundation of Quality Management (EFQM)

EFQM RADAR Logic

Results Where do we want to go?
Approaches How do we get there?
Deploy Our chosen means of getting there.
Assess Our check of how we are getting there.
Refine Our fine-tuning, to improve our means.
Models of QM

Total Quality Management - TQM

PDCA

Deming Cycle

- **ACT**: Take action to standardize or improve the process
- **PLAN**: Plan ahead for change, analyze and predict the results
- **CHECK**: Study the results
- **DO**: Execute the plan, taking small steps in controlled circumstances

TQM Model

- Customer Focus
- Planning Process
- Total Participation
- Process Improvement
- Process Management
Case study: Germany

Programme accreditation

of individual or clustered degree courses
for checking minimal standards are maintained
+ effort every 8 years
- less need for ongoing engagement
- costs

System accreditation

of entire quality management system
+ institution free to choose system that fits
+ autonomous choice of „checks“
+ self-accrediting
+ costs
- long and intensive preparation (ca. 8 years)
University of Würzburg

Bavaria, 2018
Annual monitoring
University of Frankfurt

Hesse, 2016
Case study: Great Britain

Royal Charter. NO programme accreditation (only in *private* HEIs)

**Quality Assurance Agency (QAA):** Independent body for standards and quality in HE

**Quality Code for HE**

**Subject Benchmark Statements**
Case study: Great Britain

Types of review

Higher Education Review (private providers)

Annual Monitoring

Quality and Standards Review

Office for Students (OfS)
Case study: Great Britain

Research Excellence Framework

- To provide **accountability** for public investment in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment.
- To provide **benchmarking information** and establish **reputational yardsticks**, for use within the HE sector and for public information.
- To inform the selective **allocation of funding** for research.

**Expert review**, 34 subject-based units of assessment (UOAs). **Output** (publications); **impact**; and **environment**
Case study: Great Britain

Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF, 2017)

Based on statistics, e.g. dropout, student satisfaction and graduate employment rates (National Student Survey-NSS)

Six core metrics:
1. Teaching on my course
2. Assessment and feedback
3. Academic support
4. Non-continuation
5. Employment / further study
6. Highly-skilled employment / further study
Case study: China

Self-regulation; de-centralisation (1985); multiple funding sources; competition; „elite“ notions; huge expansion.

QA framework for quality of HE and allocation of performance-based funding
Case study: China’s QA

Li, Y. (2009)
Case study: China

2003-2007  
**Education Revitalisation Action Plan**
1. teaching QA  
2. establish agencies  
3. periodic review of teaching quality  
4. links betw. program evaluation & professional qualifications & certificates  
5. evaluation standards & indicators  
6. data bank on college teaching  
7. develop analysing & reporting system

2004  
**Higher Education Evaluation Centre (HEEC)**  
Pool of experts, given training by MoE.
Case study: China

Exploration for the new round of quality evaluation

The completion of the first five-year cycle of nationwide undergraduate teaching quality evaluation

The establishment of Higher Education Evaluation Centre of Ministry of Education

The practice of ‘Undergraduate Teaching Quality Evaluation’ replacing the previous evaluation practices

The practice of ‘qualified evaluation’ of HEIs established after 1976

The issue of ‘Draft Regulation of Higher Education Institution Evaluation’

Piloting educational evaluation in engineering programmes

The practice of ‘excellence evaluation’ of HEIs, e.g. ‘211 Project’

The practice of ‘randomised evaluation’ to evaluate randomly selected HEIs with one unified evaluation standard

Encouraging HEIs to develop their own internal quality assurance systems

Li, Y. (2009)
Where do we go from here?

1. Self-selected systems work, but need maintenance
2. Quality of teaching not well established, in spite of evaluations.
3. Centralised data helpful (e.g. NSS)
4. „Mandarins“ as advisers should be used more
5. QA becoming more strategic (Germany!)
6. Data sets needs better interpretation & support
7. Institutional/departmental review useful, but what about impact?