



EFFECTIVENESS OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION BASED ON AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH (IN THE CASE OF TERMIZ STATE PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE)

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Abstract

Higher education institutions worldwide are undergoing massive changes. These result in increased public expectations towards the institutions' provision, new tasks and responsibilities for scholars and administrators, new modes of knowledge production and transfer. Higher education institutions are developing from elite systems, serving the educational needs of only a small proportion of respective age cohorts to mass education systems.

Keywords: System, education, quality, worldwide, proportion.

Introduction

The abundance of individual and organisational change processes require higher education institutions to rethink the quality of their provision in the field of higher education. Does the way in which we design curricula and in which we organise learning processes from enrolment to the final examination still respond to recent developments in learning theory and to the requirements of the labour market? Do we take appropriate account of the diverse expectations of an increasingly heterogeneous target audience? Are the processes of teaching, learning, and examination aligned carefully with each other in a way that allows us to educate the workforce of tomorrow? Do we support our students appropriately in their attempt to develop into competent and critically thinking citizens that are able to act efficiently in a more and more complex and ambiguous world? Even more significant is the process that changes higher education institutions from state-regulated institutions to independent actors on competitive education markets. The last 30 years have seen a growing number of higher education systems that have changed the relationship between the public authorities (e.g. ministries of education) and the individual institutions. Having been granted with more autonomy and self-responsibility, higher education institutions needed to think more strategically about their strengths and weaknesses. Higher education institutions have changed from classical expert organisations to organisations operating under a more managerial governance paradigm. At first,





everybody knows and feels able to recognise quality, it is there. It inspires many minds to strive for the improvement in the most different fields of life. Quality can be a passion and evoke strong emotions, be they positive or negative. The above definition of the Oxford English Dictionary initially seems to be obvious, but how do you apply it to a broader sector or field like car production, medicine or what is of greatest interest to us, higher education? There is no easy answer, although at this stage we are not even asking ourselves how to achieve or measure quality. Maybe it is easier to look at it the other way round and define what quality is not? In everyday life situations one recognises bad quality quite easily after all. This strategy could help, but then again it still might not lead to a definition that your institution (as a whole) stands behind, accepts and strives for. So what is quality? Or in the words of Pirsig (1999) and Ball (1985) one might better ask “What the hell is quality?” Our first chapter will try to give you an overview on the discussion of the concept in higher education. Answering this question for oneself and the institution (or programme etc.) is crucial to establish a basis for the quality work of the institution. It will structure your quality work, the mechanisms and instruments used. We therefore encourage you to read this chapter thoroughly, although it might seem that you are familiar with it. Sharp definitions and well-defined goals and objectives build the foundation of good quality work and systems and involve long discussions.

It is not a coincidence that many papers about the concept of quality in higher education cite Pirsig (1999) with a publication of the 1970s and Ball (1985) of the mid 1980s, although we are in the 2010s. It might be because it still is a question raised at different levels (from policy down to lectures) and on occasions such as conferences, workshops or internal meetings in the institutions. On the one hand, this is due to the broad range of academic disciplines which are involved and those participants who are new to the discussion, and on the other hand, quality has to be redefined over and over again in a dynamic world of higher education. Without being able to predict the future: certain discussions about quality will probably continue and are, apart from some ever-recurring arguments, a positive reflection of the fact that people are involved and care about quality. In the end all this might be a sign of a certain “quality culture”.

Quality assurance does not define quality, it checks the quality of processes or outcomes and can have the purpose of compliance, control, accountability or improvement/enhancement. (Harvey 2012, 6) The important difference is that quality is a concept and quality assurance is a collection of methods on how to check, maintain and enhance quality with different processes, tools and instruments on different levels starting from the policy all the way down to the programme and course level.



Standards are often widely misunderstood and sometimes used as a synonym for quality. There is indeed a close relation between the two terms. A standard can be a pre-set criterion (e.g. lectures should be rated “good” in evaluations of the faculty) or a level of attainment (e.g. the lectures of the faculty have been rated “average” by the students). Usually, standards are measurable indicators and used with the means to compare and assess things. Quality on the other hand refers to the process (e.g. how the lecture has been done). A much-discussed topic when talking about standards and quality is whether the quality of the educational process can be measured by the standard of the outcomes.

The traditional notion is associated with something exclusive and superior. This notion is not determined by an assessment but derives from the expectation that an elite education with its barriers, own rules and uniqueness can only be quality as such. There is no real criterion except the badge of elite education which is deducted from reputation and derived from many years of existence and history for example. This traditional concept is of no value for the question on how to assess quality and measure it.

This notion sees quality in terms of ‘zero defects’ and ‘getting it right the first time’, meaning also that quality is a culture. Coming from our first definition of quality as exceptional or excellence, with this notion we move from the measurement of outcomes to processes. Quality is meant as something consistent or flawless. This notion replaces the focus on exclusivity with a democratic approach in the sense of making quality accessible to everyone. Quality culture is seen as a philosophy of prevention rather than pure quality control and therefore inspection.

This approach defines quality in terms of having a product or service that meets the purpose of what it is supposed to do as to fulfil a specification or stated outcome. Quality is judged by the fulfilment level of purpose. Therefore, it is like the ‘zero defects’ notion relative and inclusive and not elitist or special nor per se difficult to attain. It is functional and not exceptional. Does this mean that everything that is doing what it was designed for is to be considered quality? The purpose can be set externally so that fitness for purpose becomes compliance. Others see the purpose difficult to define, which is why fitness of purpose has been introduced to evaluate if the quality-related intentions of an organisation, service or product are adequate. While fitness for purpose allowed inclusive quality, because everything can potentially fit the purpose and therefore, everything has a chance to be of quality, the fitness of purpose set a barrier to this inclusiveness by questioning acceptable purposes with an external view (i.e. stakeholders or the one’s own mission/vision). Therefore, fitness



for purpose should only be seen paired with fitness of purpose, otherwise purposes could be defined that have no reach or are not sustainable and adequate.

The transformative notion of quality sees quality in terms of a qualitative change and as a never-ending process. The transformation accounts both for the individual and the organisation. In education it applies mostly to the enhancement and empowerment of students in terms of change through the learning process but also more generally to newly created knowledge in the institution for example in order to enhance the provision of transformative learning for their students. There are two underlying principles of the transformative view of quality: 1enhancing the students – meansthat quality education has effects on the students and supposedly enhances them. It can though also refer to enhancing the service provided by the institution. 2empowering the students – means enabling the students to influence their own transformation. In order to empower the students, they need to be involved in the decision-making of the transformation process which will then lead to self-empowerment. Independent learning contracts for example have students negotiate their learning experience including the assessment. Other examples that can lead to empowerment are feedback evaluations, guarantees of minimum service standards, provision of choices and development of students' critical reflective ability.

Harvey's and Green's summary of the different concepts of quality in higher education clearly depict that quality is multi-dimensional and complex. Depending on who defines quality, to which stakeholder group he/ she belongs to, quality gets interpreted differently. There is not 'one' single definition of it. This makes it even more important that quality is clearly specified and defined for each purpose. To define quality for an HEI for example one might make use of some of the perspectives of the stakeholders shown in the previous chapter and selectively make use of standards as a minimum threshold.

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