

Building Quality Culture in Higher Education (Working group A)

Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE)
Croatia

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Concept 'quality culture' in higher education



- Quality management – one of the major challenges for universities operating in today's competitive (globally) environment
- QA and quality development – Bologna Process central topic at the policy-level discussions
- EHEA – harmonization of HE systems: mobility, comparable qualifications, ECTS, developing comparable criteria, procedures and outcomes for QA (Bologna Declaration, 1999)
- Cross-border recognition of external QA and use of the European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes
- Places students at the centre
- Increased demand for transparency, accountability and internationalization of education and research



Concept 'quality culture' in higher education



- Concept 'quality culture' – expands classical approaches of QA by drawing on organizational psychology, adding that field's perspective to the structural-formal side of quality management
- The first comprehensive definition of quality culture relating to the construct of organizational culture was given by the European University Association (2006):

„Quality culture refers to an organizational culture that intends to enhance quality permanently and is characterized by two distinct elements: on the one hand, a cultural/psychological element of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitment towards quality and, on the other hand, a structural/managerial element with defined processes that enhance quality and aim at coordinating individual efforts.”

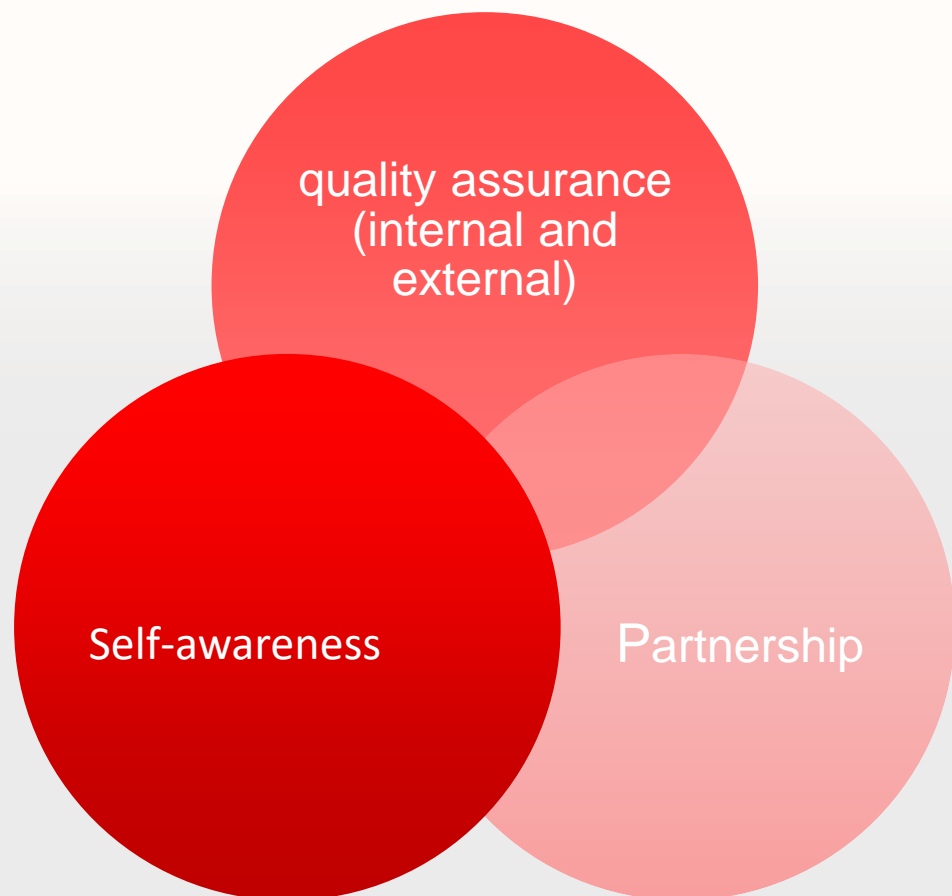


Concept 'quality culture' in higher education



Source: Final model for assessing quality culture, *Quality Cultures in Higher Education Institutions — Development of the Quality Culture Inventory*, Christine Sattler & Karlheinz Sonntag (2018), based on source: Adapted from Sattler et al. (2016, p. 49).

Different dimensions of quality culture



Quality culture:

- concept without common unified approach
- quality processes – comprehensive and fair evaluations based on clear criteria
- facilitating and encouraging self-reflection to develop and implement improvement initiatives
- Partnership, cooperation, sharing of experiences

Creating quality culture



- Institutional autonomy and responsibility for quality issues
- Quality as fitness for purpose
- Goals > Indicators > Quality measures
- Transparent and self-assessment based systems for managing and improving quality, for meeting accountability requirements – external and internal QA procedures
- Continuous improvement efforts



QA procedures – pathway supporting quality culture



- Sustainable QA schemes – synergy of quality processes, both internal and external
- External QA mechanisms have impact on HEI's internal changes
- Independent QA body (e.g. agency):
 - competently and independently carry out external QA procedures
 - partnership with HEI's
 - supported at policy level
- Mutual trust of all actors – institutions, external reviewers, agencies...

Lessons learned – ASHE experience



- Commitment of public policy players to have competent and independent QA body (agency)
- QA procedures – transparent, publicly discussed criteria
- ESG – platform for generic statements – should be furtherly developed under national QA procedures
- Respect the national context (national higher education system)
- External quality assurance has an impact
- Peer learning – nationaly, internationaly
- Partnership with HEI's
- Educate, cooperate, enhance, understand, assure further development, create time to absorbe positive benefits of change.



Topics for discussion



- External QA procedures (e.g. accreditation) as a driving force for strengthening quality culture
- Accountability and roles of stakeholders involved (e.g. policy makers, agencies, students, QA bodies) and their possible contribution in building quality culture of higher education
- Obstacles national levels for sustainable quality assurance system
- Whether quality assurance system and procedures are developed to serve the purpose
- Suggestions for further improvements





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Draft conclusions



1. Commitment at the policy decision-making level to develop sustainable quality assurance system and to make legislative adaptation needed to assure provisions in line with ESG, addressing issues specific to the national context.
2. Ensure and safeguard organisational and operational independence of a national quality assurance body, as well as the independence of the quality assurance procedures outcomes.
3. Strengthening the role and competences of a national quality assurance body ensuring further education and cooperation with international peers (e.g. QA agencies members of ENQA and EQAR).
4. Strengthening mutual trust and dialogue between all stakeholders (e.g. higher education institutions, policy decision makers, QA bodies), as well as their active and continuous effort to improve.
5. Continuing with further learning, information and practice exchange and cooperation at both national and international (regional) level.

