JUSTIFICATION AND METHODS OF UNIVERSITY EVALUATION: A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

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CONTENT

- EUROPE AND ITS HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH SECTOR
    - WHAT IS EUROPE?
    - MAIN ISSUES IN EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
- WHY QUALITY?
- HOW TO SECURE AND IMPROVE QUALITY?
    - WHAT TO EVALUATE AND FOR WHICH PURPOSE?
    - HOW TO EVALUATE AND BY WHOM?
    - DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED
    - PERSONAL SYNTHESIS
- THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE
- CONCLUSION: QUALITY ASSURANCE IN JAPAN

EUROPE AND ITS HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH SECTOR

WHAT IS EUROPE?

- **Main governmental organizations**
  - The Council of Europe (founded 1946)
    - 44 countries (including Russia)
    - Aims: promote human rights and democracy
    - Means: among others, education
  - The European Union (founded 1957)
    - 15 countries, enlarged to 25 in 2004
    - Aims: integrated economic, social and political areas

Europe and the members of the Council of Europe

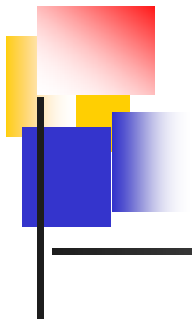# The European Union and its forthcoming enlargement

MAIN ISSUES IN EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

- Main lines of political action: to improve the competitiveness of Europe thanks to the promotion of knowledge
  - Creation of the European Higher Education area (Bologna process)
    - Aim: create a higher education space without border
    - 33 countries
    - Tools: creation of a transparent system based on a bachelor – master (and PhD?) system, to promote the mobility of students, teachers and researchers
  - Creation of the European Research Area
    - Aim: create a European research space without border
    - Tools: promote European research projects (framework programs) and improve the mobility of researchers, the transfer of knowledge, as well as the financing of research

- **Related concerns of universities**
  - Reaffirm the central role of universities for the creation of new knowledge, the transfer of knowledge and the training of researchers
  - Lead the creation of the teaching and research areas, and promote the role of research in teaching
  - Observe and try to influence the "Gats" negotiations (fear that the public institutions could be penalized)
  - Improve university governance in a fast changing environment
  - Promote quality assurance

WHY QUALITY?

WHY QUALITY?

- The quality of teaching and research has become one of the most important issues at governmental as well as institutional levels: why?
  - The world
    - is changing at an increasing speed
    - is becoming more and more competitive and uncertain
  - Therefore, all human institutions, even universities, are under increasing pressure to respond to the needs of society and to do it efficiently and in a fair manner

- **The situation of universities regarding quality is particularly complex**
  - Centuries of experience have
    - Shown that universities must be responsible towards society
    - Proven that universities best serve their community or society at large if they are autonomous from public and/or private interventions
    - Shown also that universities can do things badly or fall into lethargy
  - Moreover, universities are very costly for the State and/or for the students

- Therefore, it is legitimate that their sponsors and other stakeholders request from universities that
    - they are accountable, as well as transparent,
    - they,
        - at least, guarantee a minimum standard of quality and,
        - better, make a permanent effort to improve their quality. (Obviously, this second objective should be a permanent preoccupation of the universities themselves)

HOW TO SECURE AND IMPROVE QUALITY?

- **WHAT TO EVALUATE AND FOR WHICH PURPOSE?**

- **HOW TO EVALUATE AND BY WHOM?**

WHAT TO EVALUATE AND FOR WHICH PURPOSE?

- Basically, the evaluation can pursue four aims:
  - Check if the quality standard considered as minimal is reached (consumer protection); ex. accreditation of private universities in Austria
  - Establish the level of quality of an institution or program: benchmarking, ranking; ex. mainly the medias and a few national agencies
  - Promote quality (quality assurance/enhancement): encourage the development of a quality culture within the institutions); quality assurance program of EUA
  - Measure performance, in particular if an institution is fulfilling its missions efficiently or effectively (authorities and institutions); ex.: some aspects of the former UK system

- **The main objects of evaluation are:**
  - **Institutions**
    - The University system of a country (ex. OECD)
    - Universities or other higher education institutions (ex. EUA, national or independent agencies)
    - Subdivisions (departments, faculties) (ex. national agencies, universities themselves: Ex. Geneva)
  - **Teaching programs (degrees) (ex. national agencies)**
  - **Disciplines (research)**
    - Evaluation of the state of a discipline in a country or region (ex. the Netherlands, Switzerland)
    - Benchmarking or ranking of programs in a specific discipline
- **It concerns any or all of the missions: teaching, research, service to the collectivity (outreach), as well as the governmental policies or institutional governance**

HOW TO EVALUATE AND BY WHOM?

- Basically, any evaluation effort can be desired and implemented from two angles of view

    - **External** angle of view (governments, independent evaluation agencies, medias)

    Aim: to control and/or measure

    - **Internal** angle of view (the university sector itself and the Universities)

    Aim: spontaneous effort of quality assurance

- Generally, the evaluation effort implies a mixture of both approaches

- # EXTERNAL EVALUATION
  - ## Who:
    - Governments (Ministries)
    - National agencies
    - Independent agencies
  - ## What:
    - Accreditation (mainly minimum standard)
    - Institutional evaluation
    - Benchmarking – Ranking – Evaluation of the relative level of a discipline
    - Performance indicators (in the framework or budget allocation or of contracts of performance)

INTERNAL EVALUATION

Who?

- A university organization to serve its members
- An institution (evaluation of subdivisions)

What?

- The governance and quality assurance system of an institution
- The quality of
  - teaching
  - research
  - any specific policy (internationalization, research management, students support)

- ## How? In general
    - self-evaluation
    - external peers
    - student evaluation of a course or program

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

- Crucial question of any evaluation process
  - Cost: can become very costly (UK)
  - Human resources: is very labor intensive (difficulties to find enough independent experts)
  - Bureaucracy: can become very bureaucratic: a heavy and bureaucratic process contributes to discourage the university staff (teachers and researchers), instead of encouraging them to become more responsible and consider that any quality assurance effort is in their advantage

- Qualitative vs. quantitative evaluation?
  - Quantitative measures (performance indicators, ratio)
    - are difficult to conceive (the contribution of higher education and research to society do not appear fully in the short run, but only in the medium and long run
    - Can be misleading, that is give wrong incentives or encourage short term strategies
- The good usage of evaluation results is not always clear (should a bad evaluation provoke a sanction or special measures of support?). This raises the question of the link between evaluation results and funding.

PERSONAL SYNTHESIS

- Summary of the evaluation efforts in Europe
  - Immense diversity of systems (Europe is like an experimental laboratory!). The main differences are:
    - independent agency or governmental agency?
    - "fitness for purpose" or against agreed standards?
    - Institutions vs. programs?
  - Systems are changing frequently (rapid dissatisfaction – muddling through)
  - Evaluators external to universities have oft difficulties to grasp their immense complexity
    - Ambition to be quantitative and realize eventually that relevant quantitative criteria are missing
    - Retreat to more qualitative criteria, but often express them in quantitative form (Ex. teacher/students ratio). Consequences:
      - Either, they are looked at superficially and it is of no use
      - Or, they are taken seriously, and the process becomes very heavy

- Necessary to have a clear idea of the objectives and objects of evaluation

- Most of the confusions appears with two different types of institutions

  - The new institutions (whatever public or private, national or foreign) request accreditation to guarantee that they reach a minimum standard of quality (consumers' protection)

  - The established institutions (it is possible to assume that they satisfy the minimum standard, but they have to be encouraged or pushed to improve their quality)

- The quality assurance process of established institutions should pay due respect to five basic principles
  - **Autonomy:** the institution's autonomy must be respected and promoted as well as it is the responsibility of an autonomous institution to assure quality (accountability)
  - **Trust:** The State must be coherent with himself: if he considers that universities can or must be autonomous, he must trust them to be able to take the necessary measures to assure their quality. However, trust does not mean absence of control; the control must be a posteriori and limited to the institution globally

- **Subsidiarity:** always leave the responsibility at the lower level possible. Consequently,
  - Universities are best placed to control quality within themselves
  - Agencies must control that they are doing it correctly
  - Agencies must also be controlled

- **Pay a due respect to the complexity of the teaching and research mission of an university**; the quality of a university cannot be reduced to a couple of tangible criteria

- **Avoid bureaucracy:** it has a high cost without contributing to value (in our case to better teaching and research)

THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

EUA AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- The European University Association (EUA) is by far the most important university association in Europe
  - 630 individual members
  - 35 Rectors' (presidents') conferences
- It is the voice of universities on higher education and research policy issues
- It serves its members through many programs, in particular, EUA runs
  - executive seminars for new rectors (presidents)
  - a program of institutional evaluation (80 European universities evaluated on a voluntary bases)
  - different programs on quality issues (quality circles) and teaching issues (joint masters)

- EUA statement on Quality (in preparation for the Berlin ministerial conference on the Bologna process)
  - Universities are responsible for monitoring their own activities, including the quality of study programs, and should involve the students. Goals:
    - Promote autonomy and accountability
    - Promote innovation
    - Avoid a big bureaucracy

EUA AND QUALITY ASSURANCE (3)

- Main principles:
  - <u>External</u> quality assurance procedures must focus on the institution as a whole in that:
    - Program evaluation should be part of the <u>internal</u> monitoring that is the responsibility of institutions
    - <u>External</u> quality assurance procedure should <u>check</u> that this internal monitoring is done effectively
  - Each university should be free of choosing the QA procedures and agencies from anywhere in Europe.
  - The QA procedures should promote
    - Institutional autonomy and foster innovation
    - Cultural and organizational quality, rather than commercial quality
    - Prompt institutions to develop internal quality measures
  - QA agencies should
    - Follow transparent guidelines
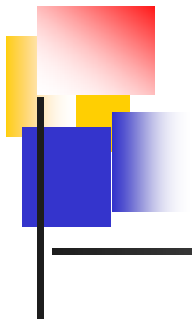   - Must be evaluated themselves

CONCLUSION:
QUALITY ASSURANCE IN JAPAN

CONCLUSION: QA IN JAPAN

- A possible strategy to introduce a quality culture in Japan
  - Examine rigorously the experience made in Europe and in Northern America
    - What has been tried and done
    - What was successful and what was a failure
  - Never forget that universities are unique institutions:
    - whose full contribution appears in the medium and long run
    - where quality and creativity can be evaluated, but is difficult to measure
  - <u>Aim at creating a quality culture within the institution</u>, enhancing quality instead of a bureaucratic system source of fatigue and wrong incentives

- **In a system with autonomous institutions benefiting from a great independence from their sponsors and tutor, it is advisable to separate**
  - The allocation of funds by the State (lumps-sums), which has to be made on the basis of a couple of output indicators
  - The quality audit, which should
    - promote quality assurance (enhancement) for established institutions and
    - secure a minimum quality level for the new or young institutions (accreditation)
    - be as light and non bureaucratic as possible

THANK YOU