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FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

REVISTA PENTRU ASIGURAREA CALITĂȚII ÎN ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTUL SUPERIOR

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AGENȚIA ROMÂNĂ DE ASIGURARE A CALITĂȚII ÎN ÎNVĂŢĂMÂNTUL SUPERIOR THE ROMANIAN AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Agenția Română de Asigurare a Calității în Învățământul Superior

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Analiză privind evaluarea didactică a studenților din învățământul universitar din România. Studiu comparativ

Dorel Vasile Ursu

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Rezumat: Interesul pentru o evaluare didactică corectă a studenților este manifestat atât de cadrele didactice cât și de studenți. Documentele elaborate de universități prevăd aspecte ale activității de evaluare didactică, impuneri și restricții asumate, precum și sugerate de instituția ce asigură respectarea normelor de calitate în învățământul universitar românesc. Se aplică multe metode, se iau în considerare multe componente ale evaluării, doar că, de cele mai multe ori, nu se parcurge întreg procedeul de evaluare didactică și se rămâne la nivel de simplă evaluare a cunoștințelor și deprinderilor. Lucrarea scoate în evidență aceste aspecte în urma unui studiu efectuat pe documente publice, la nivelul a 25 de universități acreditate din România (private și de stat). Un capitol este dedicat prezentării unor aspecte comparative, legate de evaluarea didactică a studenților în Marea Britanie.

Cuvinte cheie: evaluare, didactic, examen, studenți, fișe discipline, regulament

Abstract: The interest for the correct evaluation of students is expressed by academics and students alike. The documentations devised by universities are indeed concerned with aspects related to didactic evaluation, imposing their own guidelines and restrictions, as well as those recommended by the quality assurance institution for higher education in Romania. Various methods are being applied, various evaluation components are being considered, but, most of the times, the whole process of didactic evaluation is not entirely being carried out, thus leading to a mere evaluation of knowledge and skills. This paper highlights such aspects, resulting from a study carried out on public documents belonging to 25 accredited Romanian universities (public and private). One chapter is dedicated to presenting some comparative aspects concerning students' evaluation in Great Britain.

Keywords: evaluation, didactic, exam, students, module specification, regulations

Introducere

Dintotdeauna, procesul de evaluare a studenților a creat discuții în ceea ce privește rolul și locul acestuia în procesul de instruire și educare, și mai ales în ceea ce privește obiectivitatea. Conform Dex Online, a evalua înseamnă a determina, a stabili prețul, valoarea, numărul, distanța, durata, cantitatea, sau a aprecia, a calcula, a estima, a măsura, a prețui, a socoti valoarea unui obiect, sau a stabili valoarea aproximativă a unui bun, a unui lucru etc. sau a examina calitativ și cantitativ stabilind prețul sau valoarea etc. Niciuna dintre variante nu se apropie de realitatea actului de evaluare didactică în cadrul procesului de învățământ. Am vrut doar să demonstrez, prin această enumerare de definiții, că utilizarea frecventă a expresiei singulare "evaluare", cu trimitere la actul didactic, este total incorectă. În fapt, trebuie să ne situăm mult peste aceste definiții, și anume să intrăm în domeniul științei evaluării, respectiv a docimologiei. Dacă asociem două concepte, cel de "evaluare" cu cel de "didactică", putem defini evaluarea didactică ca fiind o componentă esențială a procesului de învățământ, alături de predare și învățare, care furnizează informații despre calitatea și funcționalitatea acestora. (Adriana Nicu, 2010). Procesul evaluării didactice cuprinde trei faze:

- 1. Măsurare (evaluare cantitativă)
- 2. Apreciere (estimare calitativă a rezultatelor măsurării)

3. Decizie (finalul aprecierii însoțit de recomandări și posibile măsuri de îmbunătățire)

Precizia procesului de evaluare didactică este dată de tipologia examinării (teste teoretice, probe practice etc.), corespondența dintre specificul fenomenului măsurat și tipologia aplicată, capacitatea de cuantificare a celui care evaluează și experiența și trăsăturile de personalitate ale evaluatorului.

Evaluarea didactică în învățământul universitar din România

Studiul pe care l-am efectuat are la bază date publice. Este vorba despre publicarea de către universitățile din România, pe site-urile proprii, a informațiilor privind planurile de învățământ în exercițiu și fișele disciplinelor. Scopul a fost acela de a identifica și analiza variantele de evaluare didactică a studenților în universitățile românești. Am analizat datele preluate de la 20 de universități de stat și 5 universități private din București, Cluj-Napoca, Iași, Timișoara, Craiova, Brașov, Constanța, Sibiu, Alba Iulia, Târgoviște, Oradea, Târgu Mureș, Ploiești, Arad, din domenii diverse precum științele exacte, științe umaniste, inginerie, arte vizuale, sport. În colectarea informațiilor am vizualizat fișe ale disciplinelor din toți anii de studiu al căror titular de disciplină este lector, conferențiar sau profesor (m-am situat în intervalele procentuale impuse privind normele de încadrare cu personal didactic, raportat la titlul academic - lector, conferențiar, profesor).

Prima constatare a fost aceea că, invariabil, toate planurile de învățământ pe care le-am analizat au înscris pe coloana corespunzătoare formei de evaluare/verificare, în dreptul fiecărei discipline, inițialele E (examen), C (colocviu) sau V (verificare pe parcurs), așa cum apare în următoarele trei exemplificări:

Tabelul 1: Variante de înscriere îr	planurile de învățământ a	formelor de evaluare
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Derectorite	Forme de evaluare				
	Denumre discipline	 Е	С	VP	
	Algebră I	Е			
	Geometrie II		VP		

Denumire discipline	Demonitor dissipling	Forme de verificare			
	 Е	С	VP		
	Statica II	notă			
	Instalații electrice		notă		

 Denumire discipline	 Forme de verificare	
Finanțe publice	Е	
Piețe financiare	V	

Așa cum se observă, unele universități își declară intenția de a evalua studenții (chiar dacă nu folosesc termenul corect, și anume evaluare didactică), dar în conținutul planurilor de învățământ apare examenul, colocviul sau verificarea pe parcurs. Unele universități nici măcar declarativ nu vor efectua evaluări, ci doar verificări ale studenților, prin aceleași forme enumerate mai sus.

Pentru a înțelege mai bine diferența dintre evaluare didactică, evaluare, examen, verificare și colocviu vom apela la definițiile oferite de Dex Online:

Evaluare didactică	Evaluare	Examen	Verificare	Colocviu
1. O componentă esențială a procesului de învățământ, alături de predare și învățare, care furnizează informații despre calitatea și funcționalitatea acestora, și care implică măsurare, apreciere și decizie	 A aprecia, a calcula, a estima, a măsura, a prețui, a socoti valoarea unui obiect A examina calitativ şi cantitativ stabilind prețul sau valoarea 	 Mijloc de verificare şi de apreciere a cunoştinţelor dobândite de elevi, de studenţi Verificare şi apreciere a cunoştinţelor dobândite de elevi şi de studenţi, într- o anumită perioadă (după o perioadă de studiu) 	 Examinare, supunere la control, probare a exactității A examina pe cineva pentru a vedea în ce măsură corespunde funcției sau calității pe care o deține sau care i se încredințează 	1. Formă de control a cunoștințelor dobândite de studenți, care constă în discuții, lucrări de laborator, lucrări practice

Tabelul 2: Definiții ale evaluării, examinării, verificării

Analizând aceste definiții, pot trage concluzia că, cel puțin la nivel declarativ, nicio universitate din România nu apelează la evaluarea didactică corectă, acestea rămânând în sfera aprecierii, examinării, verificării, a dialogului și estimării studenților la sfârșitul unei etape de studiu (de regulă semestrial). Cadrul didactic investighează studentul în timpul examinării/verificării/colocviului despre informațiile, competențele, aptitudinile, atitudinile, capacitățile de analiză și sinteză ale acestuia, sau despre cunoaștere/înțelegere, definire, identificare, operare, interpretare, limbaj adecvat.

Este adevărat că evaluarea reprezintă o măsurare, o estimare a nivelelor de relaționare și judecare a performanțelor studenților, dar și o raportare la standardele curriculare de performanță. Cu siguranță că evaluarea didactică nu poate fi niciodată obiectivă, în totalitatea ei, chiar dacă suntem asigurați de corectitudinea și imparțialitatea evaluatorului. Sunt o sumedenie de factori de mediu care concură la subiectivismul evaluării, dar acestea nu fac obiectul cercetării. Dar "evaluarea didactică nu are valoare în sine, importanța ei rezidând în efectele pe care le induce asupra devenirii personalității studenților, asupra progresului lor și eficienței procesului de învățământ" (Glava C. 2009, pg. 9).

Dar informațiile furnizate de planurile de învățământ nu sunt suficiente pentru a concluziona cu privire la corectitudinea evaluării didactice. Am studiat și fișele disciplinelor, documente care aduc informații suplimentare despre modul în care este efectuată evaluarea, respectiv criterii de evaluare, metode de evaluare și ponderi în nota finală. În întocmirea fișelor disciplinelor, toate universitățile cad de acord asupra utilizării noțiunii de evaluare, iarăși incorect, pentru că nu folosesc expresia evaluare didactică. Intrând mai în detaliu, am constatat că descrierea metodelor de evaluare didactică nu este cea așteptată, pentru că se revine la noțiuni precum evaluare, examinare, testare (orale sau scrise), foarte rar rezolvare probleme și prezentare proiecte. Până aici nimic greșit, pentru că înșiruirea de metode este corectă, doar că universitățile rămân, în cele mai multe situații, doar la nivelul de constatare a cantității și calității informației acumulate, a competențelor și aptitudinilor dobândite, a interpretării și operării cu termeni de specialitate. Pentru a ne face o idee asupra repetabilității unor metode de evaluare utilizate și a ponderii acordate din nota finală, este suficientă vizualizarea tabelului de mai jos.

Evaluare curs/ seminar	Metoda de evaluare	Procent de utilizare	Pondere din nota finală
Evaluare curs	Examen scris (apare și ca test scris, probă scrisă, evaluare scrisă, lucrare scrisă, test grilă)	56,3%	40 - 80%
	Examen oral (apare și ca oral, evaluare orală, oral cu bilete)	18,8%	60 - 80%
	Examinare finală (nespecificat scris sau oral)	9,1%	60 - 70%
	Proiecte, probleme, demonstrații	15,7%	30-100%
Evaluare seminar	Test scris (apare și ca examinare scrisă, evaluare pe parcurs, test pe parcurs, lucrare scrisă)	17,1%	10-50%
	Verificare orală (proba orală, examen oral)	12,2%	5-40%
	Test practic (lucrări practice, verificare practică, Proba orală, întrebări practice, execuție)	17,1%	16,5 - 50%
	Proiecte, eseuri, referate, probleme, portofolii	39%	10 - 50%
	Activitate laborator	2,4%	20%
	Participări, prezențe, intervenții, contribuții la seminar	12,2%	10-16,5%

Tabelul 3: Repetabilitate forme de evaluare și ponderi în nota finală

Pentru a acorda nota finală, universitățile apelează la una sau mai multe variante de evaluare. Dintre universitățile evaluate, una singură apelează doar la o formă de evaluare, respectiv proiectul, elaborarea și prezentarea acestuia reprezentând 100% din nota finală, și interesant este că nu e universitate cu profil tehnic. La polul opus

se situează o universitate care aplică șase variante de evaluare pentru obținerea notei finale, cu ponderi între 5 și 70%. Cea mai mare parte dintre universități (68%) apelează la două variante de evaluare în acordarea notei finale, evident în procentaje diferite. Cred că nu este foarte important numărul de evaluări pentru a acorda o notă corectă (un calificativ) unui student, ci mai important este să apelăm la cele mai indicate metode, care să se plieze perfect pe domeniul și specializarea evaluată. Este un capitol la care mai trebuie lucrat deoarece unele dintre universitățile cu profil tehnic/aplicativ alocă procente de peste 50% din nota finală pentru evaluările teoretice.

O altă constatare în urma studiului fișelor de disciplină este aceea că decizia privind nota finală este, în majoritatea cazurilor, la dispoziția titularului de curs. Acesta influențează cu 67,5% în acordarea notei finale, atunci când nu are în norma didactică și orele de seminar; în situația în care le-ar avea, nota finală îi aparține în totalitate. În altă ordine de idei, proba preferată la evaluarea cursului este cea scrisă (56,3%), dar are un procent destul de mare și la seminar (17,1%). Este de remarcat prezența evaluării scrise (60 - 70% din nota finală) la specializări precum Drept și Comunicare în afaceri, exact acolo unde dialogul ar trebui să fie prioritar. Există și tentația unor cadre didactice de a aloca procente în acordarea notei finale, doar pentru participare la curs (3%) și seminar (29%), excluzând situațiile în care au loc contribuții și intervenții.

Agenția Română de Asigurare a Calității în Învățământul Superior (ARACIS) are misiunea de a efectua evaluarea externă a calității educației oferite de instituțiile de învățământ superior din România. Ea publică standardele și lista indicatorilor de performanță pe care trebuie să îi îndeplinească universitățile din România. Aici apar câteva indicații, pe care ARACIS le sugerează, în ceea ce privește evaluarea/ examinarea studenților. În cadrul cerințelor normative obligatorii, cuprinse în fișa vizitei pentru autorizarea programelor de studii, se specifică necesitatea cuprinderii, în fișa disciplinelor, a unor procedee specifice adecvate evaluării competențelor teoretice și practice declarate. În cadrul standardelor și indicatorilor de performanță generali și specifici, ARACIS prevede că modul de examinare și evaluare la fiecare disciplină trebuie realizat ținând cont de rezultatele învățării. De asemenea, se sugerează ca fiecare universitate să dețină și să aplice propriul regulament privind examinarea și notarea studenților. Nu lipsită de importanță este sugestia ca la examinare să participe, pe lângă titularul cursului, cel puțin încă un alt cadru didactic de specialitate.

La nivel declarativ/scriptic toate universitățile acreditate stau foarte bine. Respectă standardele propuse de ARACIS, iar în ceea ce privește regulile proprii de examinare și notare, acestea sunt cuprinse în documente consistente, ce poartă diverse denumiri, precum regulamente, metodologii, ghiduri metodologice, sau proceduri.

Deocamdată, acestea sunt realitățile și merită să facem un studiu comparativ cu universități dintr-o altă țară europeană.

Evaluarea didactică în învățământul universitar din Marea Britanie

Am ales paralela cu universitățile engleze pentru că Marea Britanie este cea mai bine plasată țară europeană în clasamentul celor mai bune universități din lume, respectiv poziția 2 în Clasamentul Shanghai. Chiar dacă sunt foarte departe de noi, e bine să țintim sus.

Procedura de evaluare este aleasă de titularul de curs, ținându-se seama de profilul și domeniul evaluat. Eseul și subiectele descriptive sunt specifice profilurilor umaniste, iar problematizarea subiectelor, proiectele practice, sunt specifice domeniilor tehnice, aplicative. Se practică foarte mult testarea scrisă și prezentarea proiectelor sau a altor teme practice. Există discipline la care sunt aplicate mai multe componente de evaluare, fiecare cu ponderea stabilită de titular. Până în momentul acesta, diferențele față de învățământul românesc sunt minore, adică se testează, se verifică, se examinează, apreciază și controlează.

Sunt totuși și diferențe. Unele universități folosesc secretariatele pentru depozitarea grilelor de corectare, pentru fiecare disciplină de examen, grile ce sunt depuse de titularul de curs înaintea examenului. Punctajul pe subiecte este cunoscut și de studenți, dar răspunsurile corecte sunt păstrate secret față de studenți și sunt folosite doar de corectori. În unele universități, subiectele de examen propuse de titularul cursului sunt văzute și de către un evaluator extern, de specialitate, care poate să vină cu propuneri de modificare, și abia după acordul acestuia subiectul devine aplicabil studenților. Trebuie specificat faptul că la examenul scris nu supraveghează titularul de curs, ci o persoană din universitate (nu neapărat cadre didactice). Lucrările sunt evaluate de către o persoană sau grup de persoane numite de departament, care acordă o notă preliminară. De obicei, este profesorul titular de curs (care evaluează testul) și asistentul (care evaluează proiectul), dar poate fi orice persoană din departament, mai ales în situațiile în care ponderea notei la test este mai mică de 50% din nota finală. Evaluarea se face anonim, pe cât posibil, studentul nu are nume, ci un cod asociat cu lucrarea.

În Marea Britanie, după finalizarea acestei etape, urmează etapa care completează procesul de evaluare didactică. Decizia finală privind clasificarea studentului într-una dintre categoriile promovat sau respins (cu notele corespunzătoare) vine după parcurgerea a trei faze distincte, exluzând nota preliminară acordată de titularul de curs.

La nivelul departamentului sunt nominalizate cadre de specialitate care fac o evaluare paralelă, prin sondaj, a lucrărilor corectate de titular, de fapt o corectare în paralel. Pentru disciplinele cu număr mare de credite se pot evalua în paralel, de către doi corectori, toate lucrările. Urmează faza în care lucrările vor fi evaluate de un grup de evaluatori externi, aleși de universitate la începutul fiecărui an universitar, grup format din specialiști pe programele evaluate. Este un sondaj mai puțin consistent decât cel intern și urmărește corectitudinea acordării punctajelor și a aplicării procedurilor de examinare. Ultima fază se derulează, de regulă, la finalul

perioadei de examinare din sesiunea analizată și constă într-o ședință a evaluatorilor (interni și externi) care consfințește nota finală a fiecărui student pentru fiecare examen din sesiunea respectivă. În cadrul acestei întruniri se pot face ajustări, în plus sau minus, față de notele acordate preliminar, dacă se constată că subiectele au fost prea dificile sau prea ușoare, dacă anumite teme nu s-au potrivit subiectului, etc. Tot în aceste ședințe se pot face și unele evaluări interdisciplinare, urmărindu-se o notare corectă, în asociere cu rezultatele obținute la discipline conexe. Abia după această ședință se definitivează notele, studentul fiind informat despre rezultatele finale obținute de acesta la examenele susținute.

În universitățile din Marea Britanie nu se acordă note pentru prezența fizică la activități, ci doar pentru implicare în activități, de seminar sau laborator. Aceste activități vor fi nominalizate de către titularul de curs/asistent și aduse la cunoștința studenților la prima oră de curs/seminar/laborator. Ele vor fi notate și se consideră evaluări pe parcurs, cu pondere în nota finală.

Fiecare universitate are propriul regulament de evaluare, document ce se modifică periodic, în funcție de condițiile concrete în care se desfășoară activitățile și evoluția stndardelor de calitate impuse de poziția unității de învățământ universitar.

Se știe că "În Marea Britanie, Guvernul a lansat în 2005 un document de politică cu numele "Towards an e-learning strategy", cu propuneri structurale și pedagogice care să constituie un model pentru învățământul superior. În ce privește evaluarea studenților cu ajutorul TIC, potențialul noilor tehnologii este subliniat, însă recomandările converg către depășirea simplei utilizări a testelor cu răspunsuri multiple către strategii de evaluare mai complexe și mai utile pentru parcursul de învățare al studenților. În orice caz, în loc de o pledoarie pentru materiale/teste standardizate, textul documentului de politică educațională propune utilizarea de către profesori a acelor instrumente care le permit să creeze ei înșiși materialele în format digital de care au nevoie pentru evaluarea competențelor studenților, asigurând astfel relevanța rezultatelor evaluării pentru disciplina respectivă și pentru contextul socio-cultural" (Istrate O., 2009). Este foarte adevărat, doar că acum, în Marea Britanie, calculatorul nu este doar un instrument pe care studentul să-l folosească în locul stiloului (apasă o tastă în loc să bifeze cu stiloul pe un suport de hârtie) ci poate fi un partener al acestuia, și este folosit doar atunci când situația concretă o impune, și nu pentru a demonstra că tehnica de calcul este nelipsită.

În Marea Britanie există o instituție independentă de asigurare a calității educației din învățământul universitar, și anume Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). Această agenție face recenzii, verificări, monitorizări privind standardele de calitate îndeplinite de universități și oferă sugestii privind continuarea, sau încetarea activităților didactice pe anumite profile/domenii, fără a avea dreptul să stopeze activitățile didactice. Standardele de calitate sunt proprii, dar elaborate în consens cu alte organizații independente, și chiar la sugestia unor universități.

Concluzii

În primul rând aș spune că în România nu există o cultură a evaluării didactice. Asta pentru că suntem foarte preocupați să ne rezolvăm singuri problemele de evaluare și ne grăbim să măsurăm, să comparăm cu niște standarde propuse inițial și apoi să dăm verdictul, adică nota. Pe niciun document, analizat în timpul studiului, nu am văzut notată expresia "evaluare didactică". Nici măcar ARACIS nu face uz de acest concept, care este cel corect și care trebuie aplicat. Poate că nu este deranjantă exprimarea "evaluare" în loc de " evaluare didactică", dar este esențială practica evaluării didactice și nu cea a simplei evaluări/examinări.

În al doilea rând, cadrele didactice din învățământul universitar românesc nu au o pregătire specializată, instituționalizată, care să formeze competențe în didactica și metodica predării și evaluării disciplinei prevăzute în planul de învățământ. Nu există o certificare adecvată a pregătirii didactice, impunându-se totuși parcurgerea unui modul opțional, psiho-pedagogic. Cred că nu este lipsit de importanță să se găsească o formulă de certificare/profesionalizare a ocupației de cadru didactic universitar. Dan Potolea, coordonatorul lucrării "Evaluarea competențelor profesionale ale studenților", afirmă că "cel puțin un profesor din patru nu are suficiente informații teoretice care să îl ajute să aprecieze corect competențele profesionale ale studenților săi". Este un procent îngrijorător de mare, constatarea profesorului Potolea venind în sprijinul afirmațiilor mele anterioare.

În al treilea rând, profesorul român este suveran în notare și nu își împarte suveranitatea cu alți evaluatori, din aceeași categorie de competențe sau chiar superioare. El este decidentul final privind notarea studentului și nu este parte la un proces de evaluare colectivă. Singura colaborare apare între titularul de curs și cel al seminarului, fiecare notând partea lui (sunt multe situații în care titularul cursului este același cu titularul seminarului). El fiind și titularul disciplinei și cunoscându-i pe studenți, subiectivismul în apreciere poate să crească. Acest fapt este posibil și în situația în care testul este susținut pe calculator, deoarece în ponderea notei finale mai intră și alte componente ale evaluării. În studiul efectuat am întâlnit un singur caz în care nota finală era acordată după o consultare între mai multe cadre didactice, cu aceeași specializare.

În al patrulea rând, pot afirma că un procent destul de ridicat de cadre didactice apelează la notarea studenților doar pentru prezență fizică la activitățile din timpul semestrului (ponderea în nota finală fiind situată în jurul a 10%). Consider această opțiune un mod de a stimula pasivitatea, chiar dacă doar 3% acordă procente din notă pentru prezența la curs și 29% pentru prezența la seminar.

În al cincilea rând, graba de a anunța nota finală a studentului elimină, din start, posibilitatea consultării cu alți colegi (din interiorul sau exteriorul universității) în vederea asigurării corectitudinii și exactității evaluării didactice. Sunt situații în care se solicită cadrelor didactice anunțarea rezultatelor finale ale examinării în cel

mult 48 de ore de la terminarea examenului. Ori, cu cât sunt luate în considerare mai multe componente ale evaluării, cu atât timpul de judecare a notei trebuie să fie mai mare.

Aș mai consemna o situație întâlnită în practica notării din România (este statuată prin regulamente), și anume faptul că, în anumite situații, studentul poate contesta nota obținută la un examen scris. Chiar dacă universitățile se declară "centrate pe studenți", acest fapt nu trebuie să pună cadrul didactic în situația delicată de a i se contesta capacitatea de evaluare, analiză și sinteză a rezultatelor școlare de către o persoană total neinstruită în acest sens. Cred că este o practică greșită și trebuie scoasă din regulamente, sau modificată. În Marea Britanie studenții nu pot contesta nota primită, în schimb ei pot contesta procedura de examinare, atunci când consideră că aceasta nu a fost aplicată corect sau în întregime.

Lucrarea va continua cu un studiu comparativ, pe o perioadă de trei – cinci ani, privind evoluția tehnicilor și metodelor de evaluare didactică la nivelul universităților acreditate din România.

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Quality Assurance Challenges in Higher Education in Central-Eastern Europe

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Abstract

Evaluation processes have started to become a "normal" part of operation of higher education institutions in Central-Eastern Europe in the last decades. If we examine higher education institutions in this region of Europe, there are several institutions where operations are in a very high level with permanent evaluation and improvement processes of programs, quality management, human resources management and economic activity, but of course there are some universities where there are plenty of things missing and the improvement of quality assurance is relatively low. This paper, beside the need and importance of quality assurance in higher education, is focusing on the emerging issues, experiences and future challenges of quality assurance in Central-Eastern Europe and also tries to find answers for the basic question how these activities could contribute to the improvement of the normal, everyday operation of organizations, and future success of higher education institutions in this part of Europe.

Keywords: Central-Eastern Europe, higher education, quality assurance challenges

Background

In Central-Eastern Europe there are many similarities in higher education. Countries of the region basically face the same or very similar challenges: challenges of political changes of the 1990s, challenges of the transition economy and challenges of social changes, globalization and European integration. If we are focusing on higher education, in the 1990s there was a relatively wide expansion of education institutions and educational programs, due to the fact that there was a great need for certain competences reflecting market economy conditions in these countries that was missing from the earlier educational supply. Beside the state funded higher education institutions with non-profit character, market actors have also appeared in picture as private providers of higher education, everywhere in Central-Eastern European Countries (CEEC). Just an example: in post-1989 Romania there were 46 higher education institutions in the country and this number became three times bigger in few years, as well as the number of students which increased significantly. In the new circumstances the role of quality assurance has become more and more important and the processes regarding the establishment of internal and external quality evaluation mechanisms or establishing quality assurance structures has started in some CEE countries without much delay. The fact that the importance and intensity of these activities increased, the on-going progress and the organizational culture of evaluation processes have not been perfect in every situation. This certainly means that, because of the periodical nature of evaluation in a given period of time, there is an urgent pressure on higher education institutions to consider with care the activities related to external evaluation of quality assurance, from internal paperwork, site visit of experts, communication with agency etc. until the final result of the exercise. When the process is over, many higher education institutions feel they could "relax" for a while, namely for the next few years. This kind of attitude certainly does not lead to the evolution and development of real organizational culture of quality at universities, besides the fact that institutions permanently have to face economic, social and environmental challenges, so there is a continuous adaptation pressure for quality assurance processes to adjust to the changes.

Experiences

I have a dual experience in connection with higher education quality assurance: on one hand I have been invited as an external evaluator for the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) many times in the last few years. Participation in these evaluation processes is a unique opportunity to follow quality assurance processes in Romania and have an insight to the continuous improvement of quality and development processes and the main dimensions of present and future challenges of the Romanian higher education. During my visits to other higher education institutions of the Central-Eastern European Region, the quality assurance way of thinking I have learnt during the evaluation processes helped me to get a general overview of the operation of these universities. On the other hand, as a vice dean, earlier responsible for Finance, and now responsible for Foreign Affairs at the University of Pécs, Hungary I have relatively appropriate information about the "other side": how a university and other university units make attempts to deal with the challenges of evaluation and quality assurance in the everyday operation of an institution.

According to the nature of self-evaluation processes, generally speaking, strategic objectives of higher education institutions are in order, most of them are focusing on the maintenance of the present favorable position and provide future development with improving institutional quality and management, teaching and learning environment, ensuring a high quality level of education that meets the needs of the students. As well as the managerial structures of higher education

institutions, departments, centres and other organizational units of the institutions have a transparent, logical structure and they are suited for the correct management processes of the organization. The operation of the institutions relies on a system of regulations, procedures and tools covering the whole set of university life, parallel with the permanent evaluation and improvement of the different types of programs, quality management, human resources management and economic activity. The academic staff of the institutions is both academically and professionally highly qualified and has proper competencies, qualifications, and academic degrees which results in a good level of performance in teaching and research as well. The financial situation is relatively stable, number of students, educational programs, competences and qualifications, public transparency and social responsibility are considered at appropriate levels.

But if we look behind the curtain, we could relatively easily identify the challenges and problems these institutions face. One of the most important challenges is the institutional-financial sustainability that provides the required resources for the activities of the institution. This is a rather important challenge as most of the higher education institutions and organizations are financed and maintained by the state. The financial resources coming from the governmental sector are usually not in a stable level, which results in a permanent adaptation process, financial instability and insecurity, and sometimes unpredictable situations, that could jeopardise the normal operation of the given organization. If the above mentioned stable circumstances are not given, the institutions have to develop different types of surviving strategies (often instead of strategic planning) to ensure the normal operation and services. If the way of finance is not changing, universities should pay much more attention to fundraising, projects or any other opportunities that could result in extra budget incomes. It is a big question that the available human resources, knowledge and competencies are suitable for producing these outside resources or not. In most of the cases (especially in Hungary) there are many institutions that lack these competencies and those colleagues who are forced to produce extra budget incomes or forced to participate in projects sometimes do not have proper knowledge and these activities are only manageable at the expense of their normal, everyday work. On the other hand, the result is often that several "university" processes and project activities have basically no connexion with the academic world.

In an optimal situation, the financial background is stable and predictable, the institutions have enough resources to purchase these competencies from the market. Available resources are also affected by demographic processes, and demographical loops which influence the number of students, institutional capacity, human and financial resources as well. There were, and there are certain periods when higher education is among the priorities of the state and financial resources are available for the normal operation of higher education institutions. There are some situations when these preferences are changing and higher education institutions, parallel with the traditional role of the universities like knowledge transfer, creating next elite-generation, satisfying the needs of the labour market, research, academic activities are forced to produce extra budget incomes from the market, from projects that institutions use to finance the everyday operation. The big question is if universities are forced to deal with these challenges or not? Are they forced to produce money and reach a certain level of self-financing, instead of being financed by the state? And, anyway, what is the exact role of the state in this process? Most of the times, state universities have to adapt their activities to these changes, changes in the funding policies, strategies, or techniques of the state, centralization or decentralization processes in the name of anything, and in some situations, like in Hungary in the last few years, the changing level of autonomy as well.

It is also important to point out that in case of public and private universities there are great differences in finance, resources, motivation, scientific research, teaching, administration, fundraising and competences, and this is a very important aspect in Romania, where there are still relatively many private institutions which operate in the country.

There are certain situations in Central-Eastern Europe where the infrastructural background is simply not appropriate for a more sustainable operation since the buildings are old, the utilities are from the 20th century or even earlier periods: in this situation the remodelling, rebuilding is only feasible from outside (mainly governmental) resources. These outside funds are depending on the actual (political) preferences that cannot affect all institutions at the same level at the same time. In a newly built infrastructure it has to be a crucial priority to create and develop proper conditions for sustainable resource management and the state has to try for working up strategies to deal with sustainability challenges of the old infrastructural conditions as well.

According to the sustainable focus in the everyday operation, the second important field for organizations is the sustainable resource management (utilities, waste, renewable resources) that also could be a substantial priority if the management and colleagues deal with these areas and prefer sustainable solutions in resource management. Despite the fact that public service organizations and higher education institutions use very different resources, there are significant differences and many various approaches in connection with sustainability. The most often appearing activities could be the next:

- starting energy saving programs;
- using renewable energy;
- sustainable waste management;
- using sustainable development strategies;
- becoming self-sufficient institutions;
- minimizing environmental impacts of the institution;
- intensifying public engagement.

According to the OVHR-model values (Zádori-Nemeskéri-Sebők, 2016) are mainly about internal efficiency that leads to significant improvements in the efficiency of public services and designing service processes to produce maximum value for end-users by rethinking the existing organizational culture to satisfy the needs of them. By understanding the importance of the above mentioned fields we presume that higher education institutions are appropriate structures for setting examples, best practices, good patterns and precedents for the public.

To implement and realize a realistic and effective quality assurance in higher education, the most important factors could be the next:

- universities have to be proactive and have to pay enough attention to the permanent changes (number of students, financial stability, changing needs of the potential students etc.);
- universities permanently have to invest in the physical and human infrastructure and facilities when own resources, state support or any other funds allow;
- universities have to create and ensure the possibility of academic career, personal goals beside organizational goals;
- universities have to exploit more intensively the potential of the teachers and students by offering more educational programs, scientific and cultural events for the public;
- universities permanently have to manage their national and international partnerships and connexions, and should establish new partnerships with institutions, associations, companies;
- for national and international visibility and recognition on scientific, educational and other fields, higher education institutions have to develop connections with its academic and social-economic environment;
- internal quality assurance and evaluation has to function as a real process, not just a required activity for accreditation and external evaluation;
- place of quality assurance within the organization has to be clear;
- universities have to deal with social responsibility, as the third mission of higher education institutions;
- universities have to reduce the existing gaps between the missions, objectives, strategies and practices, in everyday operation;
- universities have to keep their autonomy and independence;
- parallel with traditional roles, universities have to adapt to the new needs of the students where permanent improvement of quality has to be in focus; keep in mind that adaptation needs flexibility and investment in human capital;
- universities have to find their competitive factors with specialization and have to define and find the role and the place in the local and international market.

Emerging Issues

Global economic, social and environmental processes of the second half of the 20th century have resulted in more and more intensive efforts in different fields and different levels to react to the challenges and negative feedbacks of the activities of humankind and lead to rethink the role, purpose and aims of the education all over the world. These learning processes could produce informed and active citizens who are able to solve the problems with creativity, who understand the working mechanisms of nature and the environment, society, law and the economy, understand the connections between these elements and make responsible decisions in their individual and public actions. The worldwide experiences of global education show that there have been several global, regional and local attempts, activities, programs with the participation of different stakeholders of market forces, governmental and nongovernmental actors, formal and non-formal education institutions. The main goal of these activities has been to prepare students at every stage of life for responsible actions, focusing on learning for peace, democracy, active citizenship and responsibility, intercultural learning, learning for sustainability, environmental education, with using the holistic, interdisciplinary and cross-cultural aspects of learning. The quality assurance related to the challenges and effects of these tendencies in a more and more globalized world for teaching and learning processes could be the next:

Foreign students

Globalization is strengthening the mobility of students, all around the world. This special market seems an important priority for the universities of the region that results in many foreign language educational programs on different fields. It is also possible that this new direction becomes a strategic priority of a state: in Hungary, in the framework of Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Program, thousands of foreign students enter and learn in Hungarian higher education institutions. In this year, 53 sending partner countries are engaged in the program from 4 different continents. With the number of Stipendium Hungaricum applicants, the number of available scholarship places is also increasing. In the academic year 2017/2018 approximately 4000 students can begin their studies in Hungary in the framework of the Stipendium Hungaricum Program.¹ Stipendium Hungaricum scholarships are available for bachelor, master, one-tier master, doctoral and non-degree programs (preparatory and specialisation courses), depending on the sending partner country's educational program interest.²

¹ More information about Stipendium Hungaricum Program: http://www.tka.hu/new/6984/stipendium-hungaricum-call-for-application-2017-2018

² It is also important to note that these scholarship programs in certain fields offer better conditions that Hungarian students have.

Of course, this new strategic orientation in Central-Eastern European higher education institutions results in a relatively strong competition in the region and not every university has the same possibilities and educational supply to attract these students. If a university decides to expand foreign language activities, it is also important to know our students, markets, market needs and motivations learning abroad to develop high level educational programs. Beside some very highly ranked universities, most of the students are not the best of the best and have lower financial background than those who attend Western European or American universities. On the other hand, quality assurance needs very much this field as well, and this is not just about appropriate curriculums and the foreign language skills of the staff, but also about the services and service providers at every stage of a university operation. In those countries affected intensively by migration³ it is also an important question that what kind of steps higher education should take and how these challenges will reflect in the next years.

Flexibility of educational programs

Higher education has to reflect to the changing needs of the potential students. In the 21st Century the traditional, normal, formal education of the 20th Century seems to change radically. If a higher education institution wants to attract students, it also has to deal with the atypical needs of the target groups, and this often results in more flexible educational programs (less contact hours, consultations at weekends, e-learning and distance learning methods, blended learning, validation, adult education programs, experimental learning etc.). This flexibility becomes more and more important in higher education, although universities should avoid the over-flexibility of educational programs just because of the need of increasing incomes, and also have to avoid becoming paper factories. Of course, there are some cases when this flexibility is not possible because of the legal background, although if certain circumstances exist, more students will enter to the higher education system. Flexible education also means that curriculums reflect to the permanently changing economic, social and environmental challenges and the present needs of the labour market, parallel with satisfying the needs for global competencies, global education, global citizenship education (not just language competences!).

E-learning challenges

E-learning could also be an important diversification path for universities, although to achieve this aim institutions have to rethink their normal educational activities and have to change the traditional knowledge transfer methods as well. With the spread of MOOCs (massive open online courses) in more developed

³ Due to the lower economic performance, in this moment Central-Eastern European countries are usually not target countries for migrant groups.

parts of the world, open online courses have appeared in the region too. Some universities consider e-learning programs as a new strategic orientation, others just test the potential market with different types of electronic teaching and learning. On one hand, nobody knows exactly how this new type of learning would transform the traditional academic world in the next years. On the other hand, to develop a good electronic program, universities have to learn a lot. It is relatively easy, to say, to start an e-learning program or course, but this certainly does not only requires a pdf-file on the website- time, money, energy, and a new way of thinking is needed to create efficient online educational programs, parallel with the task how higher education institutions could make money from these programs.

Cooperation, educational partnerships

For national and international visibility and recognition on scientific, educational and other fields higher education institutions have to develop connections with its academic and social-economic environment. To establish connections, partnerships, develop research and exchange programs, participate in events and conferences abroad, and publish scientific results in foreign periodicals are certainly traditional ways for cooperation. Beside these activities and institutional prestige, it is also important to meet the needs of the students, and develop dual degree/joint degree programs or establish other educational connexions with other universities that could be very attractive for those students who are seeking international experiences, language skills and would like to know other parts of the world as well. In the European Higher Education Area this way of cooperation is relatively easy if international cooperation is in focus and universities have the financial background to maintain, manage or develop these connections, although there are countries (like Hungary), where legal background and local regulations, often in the name of quality assurance, doesn't guarantee the smooth way of developing educational partnerships and cooperation.⁴ Dual degree/joint degree programs could be especially important at master level, due to the fact that in some countries (like in Hungary) the number of students at master level is decreasing (after bachelor level many students want to work and earn money) and several potential students prefer foreign master study programs instead of national ones. If universities want to reflect to these trends, they have to satisfy this need with attractive supply where students have the possibility to spend some time abroad. Universities also should focus more intensively to the incoming and outgoing students, and should intensify student mobility, if students are partners in taking advantages of these programs.

⁴ In these days it is also possible, in Hungary, that for political reasons, with changing the higher education law, Hungarian Government limits the operation of an American-Hungarian university (CEU – Central European University).

New generations

To teach new generations, new set of tools are needed, traditional learning is changing. Digital competences become key competences (Cseh-Egervári-Horváth-Pankász-Szebenyi-Szellő-Zádori-Nemeskéri, 2017), and universities have to change the traditional way of knowledge transfer (for example, how many books and traditional libraries are needed in the 21st Century?), and of course, teaching staff also has to adapt to these changes and has to use the technology of the information society. New generations probably are going to face the growing global economic, social and environmental problems. To prepare them for these challenges, new knowledge transfer. There are also new groups that are in focus parallel with the traditional markets (senior generation, high-school students, adult learning, nonformal education, study tour, short cycle programs etc.). To attract new generations, innovations, experience learning, new forms and types of education are needed.⁵

Spin-off in higher education

In the second half of the 20th century, world economy did undergo a transformation which resulted in higher appreciation of knowledge. As one of the sources of training human resources, universities gained a new role besides education and research, namely to improve the economy.⁶ Based on successful knowledge transfer and spin-off activity, any university in any region can become the main accelerator of economic growth. The number of spin-offs is also related to fame and researcher excellence. A famous university with long traditions may convince outstanding researchers more easily than smaller or mediocre universities, and such concentration of human resources combined with good opportunities may result in spin-off activity which is high quality and intensive (Horváth, 2016). Countries of the Western world are clearly in a better position compared to Central-Eastern Europe, considering governmental provisions, regional opportunities, entreprenorial affinity and availability of venture capital alike. Historical disadvantages in Central-Eastern Europe can only be counterweighed through long-lasting and hard work. Benchmarking of best practices is necessary, but only if they are adaptable to the local environment. For example, in Hungary there is a lack of ongoing and predictable support mechanism that can be found in

⁵ There are many interesting examples from all over the world, like Semester at Sea. This study abroad program founded in 1963, and now Colorado State University is the current academic sponsor of the program. <u>http://www.semesteratsea.org/</u>

⁶ According to the fact that university spin-off processes, after other, more developed parts of the world, become more and more important in the Central European region as well, it is worth to insight to the Hungarian research results of Judit Bernadett Horvath (in English: Horvath, 2015a; Horvath, 2016; in Hungarian: Horváth, 2013, Horváth, 2015b; Horváth, 2015c and Horváth, 2017.)

Western cases and which supports continuous positive results of spin-offs in their different age cycles. Furthermore, an important task for universities and spin-off companies is to find and build productive relationships with venture capitalists. (Horváth, 2015a)

Conclusion

The 21st century seems to be the period of the knowledge-based economy and society. More and more people realize this all over the world from different points of view but one thing is common: people must keep up with the economic and social changes. To achieve the aims they have to improve their learning abilities, their capacity to transfer their skills into new areas, they have to be ready to work in various fields, and to accept that this process requires flexibility, adjustment, adaptivity and investment in human capital. Institutions need much more responsibility, responsiveness, flexibility, innovation and social entrepreneurship, institutional diversity and real culture of improving academic quality, because:

- it is good for the students, they could get real, useful knowledge and competences;
- it is a clear signal for the stakeholders and governmental bodies, to the external environment;
- it is good for the institution, especially if it is based on real strategic planning where we were, where we are, what we want to do, what kind of resources we have, how we manage these resources, and what kind of objectives we want to reach?
- it can lead to a new culture of university research, teaching and learning;
- it could be an integral part of organizational culture of the academic world;
- higher education institutions have to be more sensitive towards students' needs and expectations;
- institutional diversification, specialization, new strategic orientation could stabilize university operation on a long run;
- if quality assurance became an integral part of the everyday operation of a higher education institution, external evaluation could be replaced by external assistance to help real institutional quality assurance;
- if higher education institutions want to reflect to the present challenges and want to give proper answers for the new needs, more flexible accreditation system is needed that helps institutions to develop new educational programs.

In permanently changing environmental and socioeconomic circumstances is very hard to forecast how we should manage and mediate university activities and what is exactly going to be useful in the future. The changes of the world are relatively fast, in most of the cases we are not able to see all the changes, we are not able to feel the real situations, and hardly can say what and how we have to react to reach better solutions. Permanent quality assurance approach in higher education could be one answer for these challenges.

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New Perspectives on Quality Assurance in Medical Education. Developing Essential Clinical Skills

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Abstract: Current issues in medical education involve ensuring the quality of training methods in developing essential clinical skills within a framework of two contrasting paradigms: Evidence-based Medicine (EBM) and Personalized Medicine or Person-Centered Medicine (PM). Quality assurance in medical education represents a broad range of activities, under which both meeting the requirements of the external standards and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning at an institution are included. The current article focuses on new perspectives regarding maintaining and enhancing the quality of medical education, with special attention given to the development of doctor-patient communication skills throughout clinical training. Research has stressed the importance of integrating communication skills training into the postgraduate curriculum and offered complex simulation scenarios and interdisciplinary teamwork as the greatest opportunities for learning and quality improvement.

Key words: *medical education, residency, doctor-patient communication, curriculum*

Rezumat: Provocările actuale în educația medicală implică asigurarea calității metodelor de formare pentru dezvoltarea aptitudinilor clinice esențiale în contextul celor două paradigme predominante: Medicina Bazată pe Evidențe (MBE) și Medicina Personalizată sau centrată pe persoană (PM). Asigurarea calității în învățământul medical reprezintă o gamă largă de activități, din care fac parte atât îndeplinirea cerințelor standardelor externe, cât și creșterea calității predării și învățării la o instituție. Articolul de față se concentrează pe noi perspective în menținerea și îmbunătățirea calității învățământului medical, cu o atenție specială acordată dezvoltării abilităților de comunicare medic-pacient pe parcursul practicii clinice. Cercetările în domeniu au subliniat importanța integrării formării abilităților de comunicare la nivel postuniversitar, practica bazată pe scenarii complexe de simulare și muncă în echipe interdisciplinare fiind considerate cele mai eficiente metode de învățare.

Cuvinte cheie: *educație medicală, rezidențiat, comunicarea medic-pacient, curriculum*

Motto: "...a huge part of our education here is to learn how to be compassionate and supportive of patients. Yes, for some of my classmates this is a difficult lesson but we are all learning. We are striving to become better people, better doctors, better friends. We take classes on ethics, write essays on what kind of doctor we want to be and how we think a doctor should act, and spend time with patients who have chronic illnesses at their homes, learning what life is like as a patient and how we can be better doctors by getting to know them as a person. All physicians can learn to be compassionate since isn't that why we went into medicine in the first place?" ¹

— Dejah, 1st year Medical Student at Penn State College of Medicine, USA

Introduction

EBM has been defined as "the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of the best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients" (Sackett et al., 1996). Key components of EBM include Information Mastery (IM), the skill of searching efficiently amongst medical research, Critical Appraisal (CA) of medical research and Knowledge Translation (KT), which entails applying the best evidence in a clinical setting. Although EBM has been around for centuries, the focus on using the best evidence in medical research to treat patients began in the late 1980s in Canada and United Kingdom (Mayer, 2010, p.11). The first component of EBM is Information Mastery (IM), (Mayer, 2010, p.10). Therefore, to be able to follow this sequence of EBM, a physician must be able to search within a reputable database, to be able to understand research methodology, interpret data and assess clinical cases using complex scientific reasoning. Although based on EBM principles, medical education should focus on developing research skills, comprehensive research and academic evaluations indicate a strenuous need "to re-introduce humanistic ideals into clinical practice alongside continuing scientific advance" (Miles, Asbridge & Caballero, 2015). However, a person-centered approach to medicine can only be fostered through person-centered education and training.

Effective doctor-patient communication represents an integral part of healthcare services. Research has stressed the importance of integrating communication

¹ Quote retrieved following comments regarding article "Can bedside manner be taught" by Tara-Parker Pope

skills training into the postgraduate curriculum, which should continue during the clinical training. However, defining and classifying clinical indicators for quality improvement has proven to be a difficult and complex task. Quality standards and performance indicators regarding specific components of medical education are still debated.

The lack of training in communication skills has been identified as one of the main issues to be addressed. Although most universities have included courses on medical psychology and the bases of medical communication into their curriculum, insufficient support has been given for practical skills' development. All stakeholders acknowledge the importance of a good doctor-patient relationship, but also admit that it's the one thing neglected throughout the educational process. However, professors have stated that the growing number of trainees has made this a burdensome goal to reach, the number of residents per patient is too high for an optimal clinical setting. This is just one of the multiple facets of doctor-patient communication training.

The Benefits of Effective Doctor-Patient Communication

The importance of a good doctor-patient communication has increased due to widespread access to health information through media outlets. Internet has had a massive impact on the public's expectations regarding the amount of information received during medical consultations. In the past, doctors were the main source of information for all health-related information; during the past years, we seem to have witnessed a shift in paradigm — patients require more information on the symptoms they're experiencing, causes for their health issues and treatment options. Google has become "the new diagnostic tool" for much of the population, which apart from its informative value, also has repercussions on the doctor-patient relationship. Now, with the increasingly popular WebMD Symptom Checker patients can receive a diagnostic, print out an entire doctor's report and access all information about treatment, based on their symptoms. Thus, one of the main consequences of widespread access to health information refers to the change in patients' expectations and the irrefutable need for effective doctor-patient communication.

Research has gathered overwhelming evidence for positive consequences of effective doctor-patient communication. Improved doctor-patient communication has been associated with higher compliance with medical treatment, better health, functional and emotional status, higher clinician and patient satisfaction, and reduced medical malpractice risk (Shukla, Yadav and Kastury, 2010, 208-209). The Eurobarometer Qualitative Study on patient involvement has analysed the issue of patient-practitioner relationship in terms of trust, equality, power, support and control (TNS Qual+, 2012). Findings suggest that good communication increases patients' trust in practitioners, which, in turn, enhances treatment adherence and the recovery process. Insufficient information and discussion about diagnoses and

treatments was linked to a sense of powerlessness. Results of the survey showed that patients feel more in control when they can ask questions, are listen to and are given choices, which is beneficial to their health. Although patients acknowledge doctors' expertise and knowledge, more and more of them want to be given additional information and have a role in decision-making.

These results are supported by studies on the essential role that information gathering through in-depth interviews plays in the diagnostic process. Studies have demonstrated that after attending communication skills training courses, medical trainees were more capable of detecting and responding to behavioral cues and improved their diagnostic skills (Evans et al., 1991, apud WHO, 1993, 1; Aspegren, 1999, 4). Also, research has shown that medical trainees who did not attend communication skills courses declined in their patient interviewing performance throughout their clinical training (Bishop et al., 1981, apud Aspegren, 1999, 4).

Another term for doctor-patient communication, dating back as far as 1869, mostly used in the United States of America, has been 'bedside manner'. The analysis of bedside manner of the clinical personnel revealed there were specific behaviors that were perceived by the patients as positive or negative during doctor-patient interactions. Positive behaviors included respectful discourse, active listening, while negative behaviors included an arrogant, superior discourse and disrespectful language (Person and Finch, 2009, 1-2). Even though the concept hasn't been given proper attention in the literature, studies have demonstrated that doctors who were considered good listeners had the best relationships with their patients and the least amount of negative feedback (Tamblyn et al., 2007, 993-1001, apud Person and Finch, 2009, 3). Body language has also been included in the assessment of bedside manner. Doctor's appearance, making eye contact, position of the body and the tone of his voice have been found to influence patients perception of bedside manner and ultimately, their well-being (Bendapudi et al., 2006, Frankel et al., 2006, apud Person and Finch, 2009, 3).

From a practical perspective, the benefits of making communication an essential component of health sciences curricula were also proven to be cost-effective. With this shift in patients' expectations, communication skills seem to make the difference between highly-rated doctors and poorly-rated doctors. In the private sector, poor communication leads to patient dissatisfaction, which subsequently, means profit loss. Improving the quality of health services through communication training should be implemented in core healthcare curriculum. Integrating new clinical indicators, such as doctor-patient communication, into quality assurance policies can result in multiple institutional gains. Through interdisciplinary efforts to improve communication courses, universities can raise the quality of teaching and educational methods by shifting the focus toward learner-centered teaching methods and enhancing both academic performance, as well as clinical performance (WHO, 1993, 3).

Integrating Communication into the Curriculum

Based on the growing body of evidence, medical education governing bodies have recognized clinical communication as an essential component of postgraduate education (Laidlaw and Hart, 2011). Patient-centred interaction has become an acknowledged learning outcome for many medical curricula. However, there are several key points which should be considered when integrating effective communication courses into the curriculum. Patient-practitioner relationship has become a relevant issue in the context of the patient-centered model. Developed over the past decades, the patient-centered model integrates the conventional understanding of illness (medical model) with the patient's subjective experience. The medical model was focused on the doctor's control over patient outcomes, while with the patient-centered model, the patient gained control over his condition and the doctor must be able to empower the patient, in a collaborative relationship. The patient-centered model consisted of six interrelated components, which were formulated as recommendations, in response to cues received from the patient. The first component referred to the exploration of both the clinical aspects of the disease as well as the patient subjective experience of the disease, which would lead to better understanding of the patient as a whole person. The patient-centered model implied a shared decision-making process and so the third component referred to efforts directed at finding common ground regarding the management of the disease. These recommendations focus on incorporating prevention and health promotion, while enhancing the doctor-patient relationship and developing the doctor's personal communication skills.

The communication curricula must build on the patient-centered framework and the implementation should focus on teaching residents and specialists the integrated approach to clinical practice. The goal of such a curriculum would be to develop "a commitment to partnership and the concept of patient autonomy which puts patient choices and self-determined needs at the core of health care interactions" (von Fragstein et al., 2008, 1103).

Research and health education governing bodies have mapped out the major key-points that a doctor-patient communication curricula should contain (Haq et al., 2004, 44-49; von Fragstein et al., 2008, 1103-1104; Laidlaw and Hart, 2011, 6-8). Recommendations regarding design, implementation and review of communication curriculum have included general supporting principles, which should be used as guiding framework in all areas of medical practice. The most important supporting principles which have been identified as vital components throughout curriculum design have been a focus on reflective practice, developing professionalism, ensuring ethics awareness and an evidence-based practice approach. Reflective practice referred to personal self-awareness, metacognition and dealing with uncertainty, whether it's related to case management or patient care. Professionalism was

considered the attribute which should characterize every physician's activity; it was thought to incorporate integrity, honesty and to facilitate the understanding of doctorpatient relationship boundaries. These boundaries were also the focus of the ethics and law principle. The principle of evidence-based practice required that decisions about healthcare should be based on the best evidence possible, in accordance with sound clinical expertise and the patient's preferences (von Fragstein et al., 2008, 1105-1106).

Along these major principles, doctor-patient communication trainings have been developed following specific themes, tasks and objectives, required for the effectiveness of the process. One of the studies which elaborated a comprehensive learning programme, entitled UME-21 (Medical Education for the 21st Century), has described extensively the content and methods used to teach communication skills and has provided suggestions for future efforts of integration (Haq et al., 2004, 43-49). Curriculum projects were designed to improve medical trainees' communication skills during the residency years at 12 participating universities. The targeted skills were addressed through a variety of teaching methods and applied in interactions with patients, health teams, and community members. Skills assessment was completed through multiple educational methods such as objective structured clinical examinations, feedback and debriefing sessions based on memory recall, audiotapes and videotapes of doctor-patient interactions. Although the universities designed their own communication curriculum, the *general communication skills themes* were:

- Promoting patient awareness of his rights;
- Building core doctor-patient communication skills;
- Building conflict resolution skills;
- Communicating bad news and managing distressed patients;
- Communicating with patient family members and/or specific groups such as adolescents;
- Communicating in culturally diverse clinical setting;
- Communicating in palliative care and end-of-life cases;
- *Managing patients' psychosocial issues, e.g. spirituality, sexuality, violence.*

The UME-21 project targeted specific behavioral skills to be developed and assessed. These *skills* were considered crucial to "relationship building" and improving patient well-being (Haq et al., 2004, 44):

- *Introducing one's self* attending to the patient's distress, allowing the patient to complete his/her opening discourse without interruption and establishing the most relevant information.
- *Information gathering* using effective interviewing techniques, active listening skills to facilitate patient's telling of his/her story (e.g. use of verbal and nonverbal

facilitators, requests for clarification, paraphrasing and summary statements); eliciting information to be able to describe and characterize symptoms to facilitate the diagnostic process.

- *Empathize with the patient* making an effort to understand contextual factors (e.g. family, gender, cultural issues, socioeconomic status); focus on patient's beliefs, fears, worries, expectations, and his own explanations for the illness; responding in a nonjudgmental manner to patient's discourse.
- *Providing essential clinical information* providing clear explanations and facilitating patient's understanding by avoiding overuse of medical jargon; checking patient's understanding and correcting the meaning as appropriate; encouraging questions;
- *Reaching a compromise* encouraging an agreement on problems and solutions, to the extent desired by the patient; assessing patient's compliancy and intent to follow treatment; identifying resources and anticipating any obstacles; negotiating differences in perspective, understanding, and setting goals.
- Offering opportunity for further questioning providing additional opportunities to raise concerns or to ask questions; summarizing and affirming agreement about the plan of action; discussing follow-up procedures.

In addition to these basic skills, the UME-21 project included new communication skills which may be developed (Haq et al., 2004, 49):

- *Negotiation skills* to achieve compromises when the patient's perspective and that of the physician are not fully aligned;
- *Motivational strategies for behavioral change* to enhance patient's participation in decision making, to modify high-risk behaviors and to promote healthy lifestyles;
- *EBM training from a patient perspective -* in clinical decision making;
- *Managing medical information from online sources* information read by the patient on the internet and/or advertised by the pharmaceutical companies
- *Cultural awareness* to understand and recognize different health values, spiritual practices, and use of alternative therapies.

Apart from the generally recognized skills which should be developed through communication training, other universities have structured their curriculum in a gradual manner in accordance with task difficulty (Kallail, 2011). After acquiring the basic skills in doctor-patient communication, the following educational objectives have been proposed:

- Responding to strong emotional reactions;
- Body language and nonverbal cues;
- *Culturally-aware communication;*
- Strategies for promoting change in healthy behavior;

- Shared doctor-patient decision-making;
- Dealing with sexual issues;
- Dealing with spiritual issues and diverse religious beliefs.

After acquiring the outlines core skills, medical trainees should enhance their competencies by applying all the knowledge in "advanced communication modules", which focus on specific contexts such family interviews, communicating and building relationships with children and parents; adolescent interviews; elderly interviews; tobacco interventions; motivating behavioral change in physical activity; dealing with anxiety and panic disorders; communicating with depressed patients; managing domestic violence situations; managing alcohol addiction; managing drug abuse situations and counseling; dealing with medically unexplained symptoms and the phenomenon of somatization; managing end-of-life care; communication about outcomes from a statistical point of view; setting boundaries in doctor-patient relationships.

Methods of teaching communication skills have included educational techniques meant to improve the experience of developing one's own personal and professional abilities. Two increasingly popular methods of teaching communication skills are simulation scenarios and direct supervision of patient encounters (Person and Finch, 2009, 6). Simulation has become an effective method of teaching clinical skills and manual skills, which were paramount in surgical interventions, but also across all medical practice. Research has revealed that most universities and teaching hospitals provided now simulation-based training at some point during medical education. Research on the benefits of using clinical simulation have identified several areas where human patient simulators or simulated investigations could be applied successfully. Toader (2015) showed that trainees who attended simulation-based training demonstrated improved skills in exploration and identification of lesions, shorter duration for identifying problems and enhanced rapport with human patient simulators. Toader also suggested that more time should be granted for clinical simulation-based training.

The most recent attempt at enhancing the quality of the medical curriculum was established by the "ASPIRE" project (Advancing Skills of Preventive Medicine Residents through Integrative Medicine Education, Research and Evaluation) at the Yale School of Public Health and Yale School of Medicine (Nawaz et al., 2015), which took place between 2012 and 2014. The main objective of this project was to implement a needs-based, innovative training curriculum in integrative medicine through which physicians with competencies in integrative medicine could work in interdisciplinary teams to provide holistic, patient-centered care. Although results showed that efforts to integrate both the evidence-based approach and the person-centered care still present difficult challenges for medical educators, future research should be directed at building efficient doctor-patient relationships in an evidence-based framework.

Future Directions in Medical Education

According to the World Federation for Medical Education, the basic standard regarding doctor-patient communication states that "the medical school must identify and incorporate in the curriculum the contributions of the behavioral sciences, social sciences, medical ethics and medical jurisprudence that enable effective communication, clinical decision making and ethical practices". But within a quality development framework, it is stated that "the contributions of the behavioral and social sciences and medical ethics should be adapted to scientific developments in medicine, to changing demographic and cultural contexts and to the health needs of the society" (WFME, 2007, 16-17). However, current perspectives on medical education and clinical practice indicate to "a crisis of knowledge (uncertainty over what counts as "evidence" for decision-making and what does not), care (a deficit in sympathy, empathy, compassion, dignity, autonomy), patient safety (neglect, iatrogenic injury, malpractice, excess deaths), economic costs (which threaten to bankrupt health systems worldwide) and clinical and institutional governance (a failure of basic and advanced management, inspirational and transformational leadership)" (Miles, Asbridge & Caballero, 2015).

From a psychological perspective, educational theories can provide foundation for teaching methods and curricular improvements, in terms of advancing scientific reasoning throughout medical education within a person-centered framework. First of all, the most important issue is to develop scientific methodologies which would integrate both EBM and PM, that would involve personalizing clinical and research guidelines, but also offering a rigorous framework for the person-centred approach. Secondly, medical education should foster a new way of clinical reasoning that includes exploration of the complexity of scientific inquiry, but also a humanistic appreciation for the heterogeneity of clinical cases found in medical practice (Barz & Achimas, 2015). Integration of doctor-patient communication trainings into the medical curriculum should be based on relevant empirical findings, while adjusting the content and methods used to universities' resources and cultural setting. Current and future efforts in medical education are aimed at improving practical skills development curricula and focusing on newer methods and techniques which can be used to develop residents' clinical abilities. Including medical psychology courses into the medical curriculum isn't considered sufficient with regard to clinical indicators for quality improvement. Up-to-date design and implementation of doctor-patient communication trainings use simulation scenarios, while recording residents' performance, followed by small-group discussions and video analyses.

New methods of teaching, based on simulation, allow the development of medical competency and aptitudes, in an organized setting, under the supervision of skillful professionals and without any risks with regard to patients. Through progressive exposure to diverse and challenging aspects of medical activities, postgraduate students can improve the quality of healthcare. Complex simulation scenarios and interdisciplinary teamwork offer greater opportunities for learning and development. This center is meant to ensure quality improvement through the use of high end equipment, but can also grant opportunities for the development of postgraduate students' interpersonal skills. Doctor-patient communication trainings have to be awarded the same amount of importance as granted to the development of technical skills.

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Embedding of ESG Part 1 into IQA systems– EIQAS project survey's results on ESG Part 1 and IQA: state of arts and challenges

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Abstract:

According to "The European Higher Education Area in 2015. Bologna Process Implementation Report", data on progress in internal quality assurance were "necessarily limited". Therefore EIQAS "Enhancing Internal Quality Assurance Systems" Erasmus+ project responded to this information gap in higher education area. In 2014 project partners from Bulgaria, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia decided to map the stage of IQA development in their countries and their readiness to follow revised ESG 2015. In this paper, we discuss main conclusions from the cross-country research that was based on the survey's findings on Part. 1 ESG & IQA as well as further reviews with QA coordinators. The survey was conducted in 2015 in four projects' countries that have different history and maturity of IQA development. Whereas the current stage of IQA evolution could be considered as the function of overall progress of QA at the national level, project partners decided to cooperate towards the enhancement of IQAs through the capacity building of HEIs and QA agencies.

Our major findings are as follows: firstly, most surveyed HEIs implemented IQAS during the last decade, primarily as a tool for quality assurance of learning and teaching. The ESG, both 2005 and 2015, were used as a general framework. Secondly, awareness and understanding of ESG standards, as well as level of their implementation, considerably varies across HEIs, their units and fields of studies. Thirdly, numerous barriers in implementing ESG were identified. The

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integration of all ESG standards in a consistent and comprehensive IQA system is one of the main challenges. Fourthly, better cooperation with internal and external stakeholders is needed as well as more intensive dialogue between QA agencies and HEIs. Besides, the level of state intervention into quality assurance processes should be much lower.

Key words: ESG, ESG 2015, Internal Quality Assurance System, EIQAS Project

Introduction

In 2005, Ministers responsible for higher education in Europe adopted the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance* in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) prepared by the E4 Group, namely ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) in cooperation with ESU (European Students' Union), EURASHE (the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) and EUA (European University Association). In 2012-2015, ESGs were revised to "improve their clarity, applicability and usefulness, including their scope" since their adoption. EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education) and Education International and Business Europe also joined the initial E4 group. This resulted in the adoption of new Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015) by the ministers in the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan in May 2015.

Quality assurance in higher education activities should be based on successful implementation of an internal quality assurance system, which provides information on the quality of the institution's activities and provides guidance and recommendations on how to improve these activities. Quality assurance and quality enhancement are thus interconnected, generating trust in the higher education institution's performance.

It is assumed that ESG 2015 apply to all higher education institutions (HEIs) of the EHEA, regardless of study cycle or place of delivery, as a model and a reference document for internal and external quality assurance. A key goal of ESG 2015 is to contribute to a common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching among all stakeholders. The focus of the ESG is on quality assurance related to learning and teaching in higher education, including the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation. According to ESG 2015, quality assurance should ensure a learning environment in which the content of programmes, learning opportunities and facilities are fit for their purpose.

In this article, we try to answer the question on the usability of ESG standards in building and enhancing own IQA systems, then difficulties in their interpretation and barriers of implementation. In answering these questions we refer to the results of a survey conducted in 178 HEIs in Bulgaria, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia. We start by presenting the brief information on EIQAS project and the research methodology, next we review the implementation (and challenges) of each ESG standards (chapter 1). And finally we provide the main conclusions.

EIQAS project:

"Enhancing internal quality assurance systems" (EIQAS) was an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project approved for funding in autumn 2014. EIQAS was a joint initiative of national QA agencies and Rectors' Conferences and/or HEIs. Partners of the project were: Polska Komisja Akredytacyjna, Konferencja Rektorów Akademickich Szkół Polskich, Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior, Conselho Reitores das Universidades Portuguesas, Universidade do Minho, Nacionalna agencija RS za kakovost v visokem solstvu, Univerza v Novi Gorici, Univerza v Ljubljani, Nacionalna Agencija za Ocenjavane i Akreditacija. First of all, the partners were chosen to represent both QA agencies and HEIs in order to integrate external and internal QA perspectives. The project had two main objectives. Firstly, it aimed to support HEIs in further development of their internal quality assurance (IQA) systems by enhancing their awareness and understanding of ESG Part 1. Secondly, it aimed to support national agencies in further development of their methodologies for external assessment of IQA systems at HEIs, thus addressing one of the standards of ESG Part 2.

EIQAS is the project specifically designed to support the development of IQA, bringing together both national QA agencies and HEIs. It produced four main intellectual outputs: a reference framework for comparative analysis of participating agencies' methodologies for the assessment of IQA as part of EQA; a comparative report on their methodologies; Guide to IQA featuring more detailed practical guidelines on ESG Part 1 and best practice examples and Student Guide to ESG Part 1. The project was directly targeted at all HEIs, QA agencies and their external experts, including students, in the participating countries. Indirectly, the project addressed QA agencies and HEIs in other countries of the European Higher Education Area thanks to dissemination activities.

EIQAS was expected to have immediate impact on its target group including project partners and participants and non-participating HEIs in terms of enhanced awareness and understanding of ESG Part 1 and innovative practice in IQA. In the case of partners and participants, it was achieved through their direct involvement in, and contribution to, project activities, in particular work carried out in the WPGs and training events. For non-participating HEIs, this 'enhanced capacity' effect was achieved thanks to the Guide to IQA and the Students' Guide to ESG available to all and used by HEIs when developing their IQA systems, and through dissemination activities. More details about EIQAS project at: <u>http://www.eiqas.com</u>.

EIQAS survey on ESG Part 1 & IQA:

Pursuing the first objective of EIQAS, the survey aimed to collect data on the whole progress that HEIs had made in the implementation of their IQA systems, the extent to which (elements of) Part 1 ESG were integrated into their IQA systems, and the problems HEIs had faced and/or might face when integrating the ESG into

their IQA systems. The survey findings fed into an EIQAS Training Seminar on IQA and the ESG for HEIs that was held in Warsaw in June 2015. Together with suggestions and conclusions from the seminar, they were also used to develop the above-mentioned Guide to IQA which will be available to all HEIs concerned.

Since EIQAS was a forward-looking project, the survey was based on the BFUGendorsed draft of the revised ESG, which, to a large extent, overlaps with the 2005 version. As ESG were approved in May 2015, HEIs were not expected to have the new ESG elements in place, though some might have integrated such or similar elements into their IQA systems regardless of the ESG.

The questionnaire was designed to provide mainly quantitative data as a basis for an in-depth and qualitative analysis during the EIQAS Training Seminar on ESG & IQA. It comprised 40 questions. General questions about IQA systems covered, in particular, the period when a HEI started implementing its system and the main motivation behind the decision to do so, the scope of the system, progress in its implementation across the institution and problems encountered, beneficial changes resulting from its operation, general links with the ESG and activities undertaken to raise internal awareness of the ESG. These were followed by detailed questions about procedures, processes and/or other arrangements covered under each of Part 1 ESG. HEIs were also requested to identify the ESG which had been or could be most difficult to implement, and those where they would need more clarification and guidelines.

The survey was conducted online between the 3rd of February and the 3rd of March 2015. A total of 178 HEIs responded to the survey questionnaire. The majority of respondents come from Poland (116), then Portugal (42), Slovenia (11) and Bulgaria (9) (see Figure 1).

Country	Total number of HEIs	Invited HEIs to fill in the survey questionnaire	Percentage of invited HEIs in total number of HEIs	Number of responding HEIs	
Bulgaria	52	11	21%	11	
Poland	431	431	27%	116	
Portugal	108	108	39%	42	
Slovenia	56	9	16%	9	

Figure 1: No of Invited HEIs v. No of Responding HEIs

Source: Cross-country report, 2015

The majority of respondents came from university type HEIs (61,8%) and from public sector (38,2%) while only 14,6% of respondents were from non-university HEIs and 29,2% from non-public sector (Fig.2).

Figure 2



What is the type of higher education institution?

Source: Cross-country report, 2015

HEIs with the number of students ranging from 1000 to 5000 and from 5000 to 25 000 constituted the majority of respondents. Details on the size of the HEIs participating in the survey are shown below:

Figure 3





Source: Cross-country report, 2015

When we asked about the stage of implementation of IQAs, the majority of responding HEIs (76,3%) confirmed that their IQA systems have reached the formal implementation. The remaining 16,7% declared that they have a number of unrelated procedures which do not yet form a system and 5,1% have only a single procedure or tool. The "Other" answers showed that implementation of IQAs or their procedures are still in progress. 22 out of 178 respondents skipped the question.

Figure 4



Source: Cross-country report, 2015

In most of the cases (55,9%) IQAs were established between 2006 and 2011 and were mainly prompted by national requirements (46.6%) (e.g. in 2007 requirements came into force in Poland, in 2006 in Slovenia QA agency SQAA was founded, or in 2009 in Portugal QA agency A3ES was established). It is worth to be mentioned that in Bulgaria, in contrast to the other partner countries, 100% of responding HEIs declared that they established IQAs on their own decision and between 2006-2011 all had IQAs in place. On basis of survey results we can also observe further intensive development of formal IQA systems between 2012 and 2014 (24,6%) which could be caused by e.g further legislative changes at the same time in Poland and at the same time relevant requirements for IQA.

The breakdown of responses is presented below (still 60 out of 178 respondents skipped the questions):

Figure 5

When did your institution start establishing a formal internal quality assurance system?



Source: Cross-country report, 2015

Figure 6

What prompted your institution to establish a formal internal quality assurance system?



Source: Cross-country report, 2015

In 97.1% of cases the IQA systems cover teaching and learning activity, while research and governance is covered only in 53.6% and 54.3 % of responses. A great number of HEIs (29%) also decided to skip the question. Although there were only 138 answered questions and 40 skipped questions about the covered areas, the results confirm what the common sense is. Research and governance are not usually included in the IQA systems. There is clearly much room for improvement in this area in most of the HEIs, even in those that have their IQA systems more consolidated.

Figure 7



Source: Cross-country report, 2015

More than half of responding HEIs confirmed that IQA system covers all units (faculties, departments, etc.), while in 36,2% of the cases the progress of implementation varies to some extent or in 8% considerably. 22% of responding HEIs decided to skip the question. The detailed level of implementation of the IQA system in individual units of the HEIs is shown below:

Figure 8

How would you describe the progress in the implementation of the internal quality assurance system (or, in case a formal system is not yet in place, in the implementation of individual procedures) across your institution?



Source: Cross-country report, 2015

Respondents from all countries identified slightly different main groups of problems even though there were some commonalities in individual answers (e.g. lack of qualified staff, involvement of stakeholders and bureaucracy when developing or implementing their IQA systems. In all countries respondents observe rather similar beneficial qualitative and quantitative changes or innovative practices introduced on the basis of evidence collected through the internal quality assurance system).

According to the majority of responding HEIs (61.7%), IQA documents refer indirectly to the ESG as they are based on national legislation/national external evaluation criteria in which the ESG are integrated. At the same time 50 respondents out of 178 decided to skip the question, which might indicate some problems in that

area or law awareness of ESG Part 1 components. The IQA systems of responding HEIs vary with regards to their reference to the ESG, as it is shown below:

Figure 9



Do internal quality assurance documents of your institution refer to the ESG?

Most of the HEIs (38%) use the current version of ESG as broad guidelines for selected elements of the internal quality assurance system. The rest of the HEIs use the ESG as an indicative checklist to ensure broad compliance with the ESG (24%), or they have integrated the ESG into their own standards and guidelines (14.7%). Over 9.3% HEIs use no ESG at all.

Figure 10



Source: Cross-country report, 2015

Only 31.5% of HEIs organised training events or seminars specifically dedicated to the ESG (e.g. in Bulgaria none of the responding HEIs organized any training events or seminar specifically devoted to the ESG). The majority of HEIs (38.6%)

Source: Cross-country report, 2015

held training events and seminars on internal quality assurance where the ESG were not explicitly discussed. 51 out of 178 decided to skip the question.

Findings:

Over the past two decades, HEIs in the four countries have witnessed pronounced and dynamic development of IOAs. In all the countries, external bodies responsible for QA were established. Moreover, some crucial changes were introduced to laws on higher education systems, which in some cases imposed legal requirements to establish IQA systems. HEIs have adopted more systematic approaches to IQA and to the formalisation of solutions to this issue. At present, HEIs have IQA systems in place, whose functioning varies greatly between individual faculties/units and fields of study. Certain lack of consistency and sophistication can be attributed to rather low level of awareness of quality management principles among internal stakeholders, especially teaching staff, and their reluctance to change. Quality managers still meet internal and external obstacles in developing adequate IQAs, but at the same time they provide many good examples of activities undertaken in that area and observe beneficial qualitative and quantitative changes. Besides, frequent changes of legal requirements cause dissatisfaction among those involved in IQA at managerial and operational levels. HEIs often declare difficulties related to bureaucracy, which can be considered a sensitive issue in the higher education and quality assurance system at the moment.

The development of those systems and their effectiveness is monitored on an ongoing basis and evaluated by QA agencies. All agencies in partner countries have been externally reviewed for the purpose of full membership of ENQA. The continuous improvement of the agencies' external quality assurance systems is a priority for their future operations.

As for the progress in ESG implementation made so far and measured on the basis of the survey results, it is not feasible to perform a comparative study with the previous period, as no similar study has been conducted in the four countries. Moreover, it is not possible to establish any correlation between the implementation of individual ESG standards at HEIs and its timing. It has only been confirmed that intensive development of IQA took place between 2006 and 2011 and after 2011. All ESG standards correspond to different activities of HEIs, which was reflected in the survey results and examples given by the respondents. ESG are treated rather as a broad framework for further IQA activities.

As for the revised ESG 2015, the results of the survey showed that HEIs are willing and ready to follow them, despite the short history of IQA systems development in some countries and the degree of their advancement. Some HEIs, which were aware of beneficial changes in quality management and of the importance of quality culture, decided to introduce and develop IQA systems on their own initiative, without external pressure. Nevertheless, further clarifications of individual standards and their popularisation is highly required, since the majority of respondents still identify internal and external obstacles in applying revised ESG. The results of the survey and the need for further support in IQA enhancement expressed by HEIs should result in activities at the national level (policy makers, QA agencies, conferences of rectors) as well as at the European level (ESU, EURASHE, ENQA etc.).

Figure 11



Source: Cross-country report, 2015

Figure 12

Which standard of ESG 1.1 to 1.9 would be difficult to apply/ integrate into IQAs?



Source: Cross-country report, 2015

ESG 1.1. Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders (ESG 2015, 11).

Approximately 60% of the HEIs that responded to the survey have a published policy for quality assurance and external stakeholders were involved in both the development and implementation of the policy. In most cases quality strategic goals are directly incorporated by HEIs into strategic plans and they do not develop separate documents for their quality assurance policy. Cooperation with external stakeholders shows an increasing tendency for the last few years and confirms the response of the HE sector to the labour market needs. This standard corresponds to the procedure for initiating, discussing, implementing, as well as assessing QA strategy and/or policy. The institution's policy for QA must be visible and planed for all dimensions of HEIs operation (teaching, learning, research, collaboration with environment, strategic planning, involvement of internal and external stakeholders etc.).

The main challenges to the implementation of a given standard include:

- Placing accountability and enhancement under one roof of internal quality assurance;
- Tailoring internal quality assurance systems to the needs and expectations of stakeholders;
- Designing clear, realistic and measurable quality goals;
- Developing quality culture that is visible at all levels and embedded in academic tradition;
- Involving external stakeholders is pivotal for the development and implementation of quality assurance policy;
- Complex and flexible structures for quality assurance and management;
- Resistance of academic staff to be involved in quality assurance;
- Fostering internal discussion on quality assurance across a HEI;
- Developing common quality-taxonomy among all stakeholder groups;
- Overcoming prejudice towards cooperation with external stakeholders;
- Operationalisation of quality assurance policy;
- Regular monitoring of quality assurance policy implementation.

ESG 1.2. Design and approval of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015, p. 11).

The procedure for design and approval of programmes is not followed in all fields of study in all the HEIs of the four countries of the project. While the approval procedure does not generate a problem for respondents, the designing procedure is declared as a weakness. Nevertheless, the majority of programmes are designed in line with institutional strategies, mission statements and vision and refer to the National Qualification Framework. The involvement of external stakeholders in the procedure of design and approval still requires more attention. External stakeholders include, for example, alumni, graduates, employers from the business or public sector, other business partners, mentors, etc.

The main challenges to the implementation of a given standard include:

- Over-regulation and frequent changes of national legislations; overwhelming bureaucracy and lack of autonomy of HEIs are regarded as the main obstacles in some countries;
- Difficulties with the definition and validation of intended learning outcomes and difficulties with involving external stakeholders are also relevant. There is a distance between HEIs and external stakeholders at different levels. They have different aims, different timelines and they speak different languages. It is not only perceived in a sense of real distance, but also as cultural and understanding difference. Both groups communicate in different languages and it is necessary to develop a common understanding. There is a need for appropriate "wording" to define L.O. as HEIs and external stakeholders "speak different languages";
- Random design of the programmes without internal consistency between course design can form a barrier;
- Effective communication between HEIs and all stakeholders should be enhanced;
- HEIs should establish a cyclical link between Standard 1.2 and 1.9 (to obtain relevant feedback).

ESG 1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach. (ESG 2015, 12).

Students are systematically involved in IQA activity, and student-centred learning, teaching and assessment is said to be well understood by HEIs all over the four countries. However, the actual implementation of this range of issues in the revised ESG should be more fully addressed.

Fairness and consistency achieved through the procedure of student assessment was quite misunderstood by most HEIs and over 62% respondents decided to skip the question.

The main challenges in the implementation of given standard are recognized in: Goals and paradigm shifts

- Increased motivation and engagement of students in the learning process;
- Higher efficiency of study process;
- Empowering students for their future life, by developing interpersonal and intercultural competences etc. and above all, the ability to learn how to learn in various settings (ESU 2015, 31);
- Making L&T a core priority of HEIs (often neglected in view of the importance of the research activities);
- Promoting mutual respect between students and teachers;
- Acknowledging students are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge (ESU 2015, 1);
- "Putting the students in the driver's seat of their learning experience and facilitating the process of learning to learn" (ESU 2015, 1);
- Viewing students as co-producers of knowledge and part of the academic society (ESU 2015, 1).

Principles of SCL (ESU 2015, 5–7):

- SCL requires an ongoing reflexive process (clashes with SCL as a standard);
- SCL does not have a "One-Size-Fits-All" Solution;
- Students have different learning styles;
- Students have different needs and interests;
- Choice is central to effective learning in SCL;

- Students have different experiences and background knowledge;
- Students should have control over their learning (e.g. involvement in curricular development);
- SCL is about enabling, not telling;
- Learning needs cooperation between students and staff.

ESG 1.4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Institution should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of students "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification. (ESG 2015, 13).

Standard 1.4. addresses student's life-cycle, from admission to progression, recognition and certification. HEIs apply consistent regulations concerning student admission, recognition and certification in the four countries. At present, the development of regulation on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning pose a great challenge for the development of IQAs. The recognition of progression in joint programmes and foreign qualifications are the most critical issues in the frame of this standard.

The main challenges in the implementation of given standard are recognized in:

- Adopted procedures should cover efficiently all phases of a student life cycle, not just admission and graduation;
- Monitoring the academic progress of students along the study programme is essential to establish a functional alumni network, to assure the collaboration with external organizations as potential employers and National Academic Recognition Information Centres (ENIC/NARIC);
- With regard to formal, informal and non-informal education, a substantial level of efforts should be made to develop standards to evaluate and recognize these learning processes in situ and in mobility- students are important internal stakeholders therefore should be included in all these processes through appropriate protocols.

ESG 1.5. Teaching staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff (ESG 2015, 13).

In the four countries participating in EIQAS project, teaching staff is assessed on a regular basis since, in some cases, it is required by national regulations. The remaining activities which include professional development opportunities provided to teaching staff, incentives to encourage the professional development of teaching staff, incentives to encourage the use of new technologies in teaching, or mechanism for rewarding teaching achievements vary greatly among units and fields of study. The main problem is linked to the regular monitoring of teaching staff satisfaction.

The main challenges of the implementation of a given standard include:

- Insufficient knowledge/skills in the scope of LO (learning outcomes) and innovative pedagogy/teaching;
- Limited, if any, incentives- more frequently demotivation (e.g. no raise or even decrease in salary);
- Problems with teaching staff assessment rules/criteria:
 - difficulty in defining criteria for effectiveness/excellence in teaching,
 - focus on research little recognition for excellence in teaching,
 - limited transparency,
 - uniformity (disciplines differ with regard to teaching styles).

ESG 1.6. Learning resources and student support

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided (ESG 2015, 14).

The implementation of ESG 1.6. varies greatly among different fields of study and units through the four countries. At present, all of responding HEIs provide academic, financial and personal advice to students. Besides, they have in place a mechanism for informing students about the support and services available. At the same time there are still HEIs which declare that they do not have a mechanism for assessing the adequacy and accessibility of learning resources or student support, or do not have in place procedures to ensure that administrative staff is properly qualified to deliver support services.

The main challenges in the implementation of given standard are recognized in:

• The popularisation of higher education resulting in an increased demand for resources supporting education, students and doctoral students. An increase in the number of education process participants and the need for the equal and active inclusion of all people receiving an education requires focussing on groups with special needs which, in turn, necessitates higher and higher expenditure;

- Economic and political limitations are the reason why HEIs find it challenging to establish contact and enter into strategic cooperation and partnership with appropriate organisations and companies, including other HEIs and the social and economic environment, in order to raise the quality of resources and support provided in the process of education;
- The need for designing and implementing effective solutions including the planning, monitoring, evaluation and improvement of resources and support offered to students and doctoral students.

ESG 1.7. Information management

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities (ESG 2015, 14).

The majority of HEIs have a formal mechanism for analysing and using data collecting for quality assurance enhancement purposes (e.g. key performance indicators, profile of the student population, student progression, success and drop-out rates, students' satisfaction with programmes etc.) It shows a fairly good observance of standard requirements by HEIs.

The main challenges in the implementation of given standard are recognized in:

- Low compatibility between changing and different informational systems (and also different databases);
- Lack of awareness of the importance of analysing data for the purpose of improving the internal quality system (IQA system);
- Lack of adequate and sufficient response/feedback from stakeholders (Alumni, employers etc.);
- Inadequate fragmentation of data-collection, data-analysis and datainterpretation (collecting data, analysing data, identifying facts);
- Identified poor response rate from the stakeholders.

ESG 1.8. Public information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible (ESG 2015, 15).

HEIs in these four countries provide full information about the programmes they offer, including admission criteria, full curricula, syllabuses etc. However, some

of them declare that some legal requirements (data protection law) might hinder public information activities.

The main challenges in the implementation of a given standard are recognized in:

- Distinguishing the marketing activities from the public information;
- Assuring objectivity and accuracy in the information published;
- Providing transparent information about the programmes while protecting intellectual property rights (i.e. syllabi, course composition, etc.);
- Reassuring public confidence in reliability of the information provided.

ESG 1.9. On-going monitoring and periodic reviews of programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned (ESG 2015, p. 15).

Standard 1.9 is strongly linked with Standard 1.2. The most important critical issue is also the involvement of the external stakeholders in the on-going monitoring and periodic reviews of programmes all over the four countries.

The main challenges to the implementation of a given standard include:

- Lack of funding that affects the implementation of the standards, since the institutions are understaffed and lack financial resources;
- Low levels of engagement and motivation of students (in certain cases also staff) are perceived as an obstacle;
- Lack of understanding of the objectives of the process.

ESG. 1.10. Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis (ESG 2015, 15).

According to the HEIs of the four countries, the external evaluation methodology of quality assurance agencies could be improved in the aspect of the criteria and methodology of assessment, time and quality-related costs, trainings of experts, as well as further support and consultancy. The complex and multi-area impact study on influence of EQA on IQA could improve the knowledge of quality assurance agency and its adjustment to relevant expectations and needs.

The main challenges of a given standard's implementation are as follow:

- Interest in the analysis of EQA's impact on IQA is still very limited;
- Legislative framework may disturb the efficiency and relation between EQA and IQA processes;
- Bridging the gap between EQA and IQA is still relevant and poses a challenge to HEIs and QAAs.

Final Conclusions:

Creating modern and ESG-based IQA systems is a relatively new phenomenon in the analyzed countries. There are still about one-fourth of the surveyed universities that did not provide any evidence confirming existence of systemic solutions in quality assurance. For most HEIs the impetus for the development of IQA systems were external requirements rather than their own needs. The systems mainly cover teaching and learning processes, but only to some extent research and university governance. The overall level of awareness and usability of ESG in the construction of IQAS is relatively high, as it constitutes a reference point for 80% of universities. There is considerable variation in the implementation of ESG standards across universities, their units and fields of studies. Not all ESG standards are equally understandable, and the main difficulties in their implementation relate primarily to those which determine the effectiveness of the learning and teaching processes (standard 1.5 and 1.3). In spite of the fact that 38,3% of responding HEIs do not have difficulty in integrating the revised standards for ESG in their local IQA systems, the remaining HEIs are still identifying a number of internal and external obstacles which might prevent full compliance with the ESG standards such as stakeholders' reluctance, insufficient resources, organizational deficiencies, ambiguity of legal regulations, lack of financial support, weak support from external quality assurance providers etc.

The survey results showed the need for further improvement of EQA at national level. This can be achieved by a stronger involvement of external stakeholders in the development of assessment criteria and procedures, a rethinking of the pilot procedures approach, introducing the process of clarification and information supported by the consultancy services of the agency, systematic approach to experts' training, internationalization of assessment procedures and delivering an impact study on EQA versus IQA. The reduction of legal restrictions hindering creation and functioning IQAS is needed.

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Using Curriculum Mapping to Ensure Programme Coherence in Internal Quality Assurance

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Abstract: A key priority throughout all of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG 2015) is ensuring programme coherence. Achieving programme coherence requires appropriate alignment between intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment. This article focuses on curriculum mapping as a means of ensuring programme coherence. Such mapping exercises may require programme teams to map their programmes using qualifications framework, and draw on curriculum models or taxonomies. Dialogue and collaboration is also a key part of the mapping process. The examples illustrate how internal quality assurance can be enhanced by a greater focus on programme coherence.

Key words: *internal quality assurance, constructive alignment, curriculum mapping*

Introduction

Coherence can be defined as systematic connection or consistency. Applied to higher education, it requires all the diverse elements, relationships, or values involved to work together in a logical and reasonable way. Pursuing such coherence is a key issue in the ESG and all of the standards in the Internal QA section are concerned with it one way or the other. It provides the rationale for the very first standard in the Internal QA section, 'policy for quality assurance' (Standard 1.1) (ESG 2015), with the accompanying guidelines for this particular standard noting that, "policies and processes are the main pillars of a coherent institutional quality assurance system".

While this first standard refers to coherence at the institutional level, it is the coherence at the programme level that is addressed directly in the next two standards, and that will be the focus of this article. Standard 1.2, "design and approval of programmes" focuses on coherence between intended outcomes and programme activities requiring that, "programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes". Coherence

between learning activities and assessment is the focus of the third standard, "Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment", requiring programmes to be delivered in a way that "encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach" (1.3).

The remaining standards are also geared towards ensuring that programmes are offered and experienced as intended- in other words, in a systematic, and coherent way. They refer to appropriate provision for staff competence (1.5), learning resources and student support (1.6), information management (1.7), ongoing monitoring and review (1.9), and cyclical external quality assurance (1.10). The standard on public information (1.8) can also be considered relevant for programme coherence in that it requires programme information to be "clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible".

Programme Coherence and Quality Assurance

While the ESG is a European-wide initiative, associated with European umbrella organisations such as ENQA, an analysis of the criteria used by its member agencies also shows how programme coherence is a major focus at the national level in individual countries. In Lithuania for example, the six criteria used by the national QA agency are: (1) programme aims and learning outcomes; (2) curriculum design; (3) teaching staff; (4) facilities and learning resources; (5) study process and students' performance assessment; (6) programme management (SKVC 2010). It is readily obvious how coherence would relate directly to criteria 1, 2 and 4, while the remaining criteria are also relevant for ensuring that the programme coherence that is intended can be realised.

Elsewhere, in the French-speaking Community in Belgium, the five criteria used by AEQES for quality assurance of programmes are: (1) policy on quality; (2) programme relevance; (3) internal programme coherence; (4) programme effectiveness, efficiency and equity; (5) ongoing improvement (AEQES 2015). As the title suggests, the third criterion targets internal programme coherence explicitly. However, the usefulness of all the others is also obvious. For example, the second focuses on the relevance of the programme for the needs of stakeholders, especially students and employers, and thereby examines coherence between programme goals and these needs. The fourth criterion is also relevant given that programmes cannot be effective if they are not coherent.

Programme coherence is therefore a key priority in the evaluation methodologies used by external QA agencies, which in turn heightens awareness among the HEIs on programme coherence in their own internal QA activities. This article focuses on curriculum mapping as one means for achieving programme coherence, suggesting various frameworks and taxonomies that can be used to enhance such mapping exercise, thereby enabling HEI staff to think critically about programme coherence. These include European and national qualifications frameworks, the use of taxonomies such as the revised taxonomy for educational objectives (Anderson et al. 2005), and curriculum design frameworks such as Understanding by Design (Wiggins and McTighe 2004). It also draws on an example from the field of teacher education, showing how a curriculum mapping exercise can be used in professional higher education to examine the extent to which the programme is aligned to the required professional standards (i.e., not just aligned to its own internal programme outcomes). The article also addresses some key objections to the learning outcomes paradigm which provides the basis for exercises such as curriculum mapping, and argues that the benefits for quality assurance outweigh any weaknesses that can be identified.

Curriculum Mapping

Curriculum mapping is becoming an increasingly important activity for programme level review and development (Uchiyama & Radin 2009). Dialogue and collaboration is a key part of the mapping process undertaken by programme teams resulting in curriculum maps for the programme in question (Hale and Dunlap 2010, 18), thereby constituting an important opportunity for the professional development of programme teams. Curriculum mapping can be undertaken as part of the initial curriculum design process, or as an activity within a later review.

The purpose of curriculum mapping is to ensure that the teaching and learning activities, assessments, and/or content of a programme align with the programme outcomes. This is to enable programme teams to promote: transparency for students and staff; coherence of programme content, teaching and assessment approaches; efficiency in teaching, learning and assessment approaches; the key institutional attributes to be reflected in the programme (Arafeh, 2015). Some key questions to be considered are:

- Is there an optimum congruence between overall programme goals or outcomes and those used at the level of individual modules or courses within the programme?
- Is there an optimum match or alignment between programme content, teaching, learning and assessment approaches?
- Are the important graduate knowledge, skills, and competences targeted sufficiently and consistently across the programme? Are students enabled to develop these throughout in a cumulative or cyclical way?
- Does the programme outcomes address the needs of the students and are they sufficiently ambitious?
- Are there high-impact educational practices used sufficiently across the program?
- Is there a range of assessment methods used to properly assess students' mastery of the knowledge, skills and competences?

• Is there consistency in approach between modules and courses within the programme? Are they in an appropriate sequence? Does overlap occur and is it necessary?

An important step in curriculum mapping is devising questions such as these so that the benefits from the curriculum mapping exercise can be fully exploited. Mapping tools are also available for this purpose.¹

Qualifications Frameworks

Various sources exist at a European and national level to guide the formulation and review of learning outcomes, corresponding to the different knowledge, skills and competences which higher education programmes are required to support. The European Qualifications Framework (European Parliament and Council 2008) provides a set of eight descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at all levels in any system of qualifications. An important exercise therefore in internal quality assurance is making sure that the programme supports the kind of knowledge, skills and competences associated with a particular qualification level, and making sure that this happens in a coherent way, i.e. with regard to the programme learning outcomes, the teaching learning activities and the assessment.

Qualifications frameworks are also available at a national level which offer additional guidance. In Ireland, for example, the main strands of learning outcome are (1) knowledge, (2) know-how and skill, and (3) competence, with these being then sub-divided into sub-strands:

(1) knowledge; breadth; kind;

(2) know-how and skill: - range, selectivity;

(3) competence: context, role, learning to learn, insight.

For example, the first of the strands, "Knowledge", can be described by its 'breadth', i.e. the diversity, complexity and variety (as distinct from volume). The greater the breadth of knowledge, the higher the level of outcome. On the other hand, the second sub-strand, "kind" refers to the extent to which the knowledge is abstracted from concrete phenomena into theory.

In incorporating these kinds of outcomes, the framework shows how knowledge, skills and competences vary in challenge and complexity, depending on the level on the framework. For example, in the case of the second sub-strand from the Knowledge strand, the distinction between bachelor and master level learning is based on where the intended learning is positioned within the established discipline knowledge, i.e. whether at the boundary, or at the forefront.

¹ For example, various tools are proposed here by the University of Adelaide, https://www.adelaide.edu.au/professions/pedagogical-possibilities/change/curriculum/mapping/

Table 1: Example showing how the sub-strand Knowledge-kind is differentiatedbetween Bachelor and Master level in the Irish NFQ

Bachelor level	Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s)
Master	A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights generally informed
level	by the forefront of a field of learning

From Irish NFQ (NQAI, 2003)

It is obvious that achievement in some sub-strands is easier to assess than others. Thus the competence of "learning to learn" makes explicit in the outcomes, certain kinds of learning that would previously have been considered as part of the learning process, rather than as outcomes to be explicitly certified in awards (NQAI 2003, 24).

Frameworks such as these, whether European or national, are a reminder of the need to consider the kind of knowledge, skill and competence that is being developed in a given programme. As a mechanism for quality assurance, it requires programme actors to consider not just the coverage of learning outcomes, but rather the depth and complexity.

Mapping in Professional Higher Education

Such frameworks can also be used by professional bodies in informing the development of their own professional standards which they expect higher education programmes to meet. For example, in Ireland, the professional body for teachers, the Teaching Council has used the categorisation of knowledge, skill and competence in the national framework of qualifications (NFQ) (NQAI 2003) to delineate its own professional standards for primary and post-primary teaching, i.e. what it expects entrants to the teaching profession to have achieved upon completion of a programme of initial teacher education (Teaching Council 2011). Professional accreditation process therefore works as a kind of external QA, for example, as illustrated in an example taken from pharmacy education (de Paor, 2016).

The professional outcomes are categorised according to the three strands used in the national framework, which are also linked to professional attributes relating to the work of teachers. For example, the learning outcomes presented within the NFQ sub-strand, Competence-Learning to Learn, all relate to how the programme develops The Teacher as Lifelong Learner. On the other hand, the sub-strand Competence-Insight is equated with Professional and Ethical Teaching.

As part of the professional accreditation process, HEIs are required then to map

their own programmes against these professional standards. The HEI would of course factor the needs of teachers when designing the programme initially, but mapping it against professional standards provides another exercise in the test for programme coherence. Such an exercise can be used to highlight what needs to be done so that professional outcomes are addressed adequately within particular modules, or indeed, where necessary, across all of the modules.

While such mapping against professional learning outcomes offers insight into coverage, i.e., the extent to which professional outcomes are addressed, further work is needed in order to judge the depth to which a programme addresses the outcomes. This requires additional documentation, which the Teaching Council also requests, such as grading rubrics, course outlines, and samples of student work graded using grading rubrics. For HEIs, the act of collating this additional documentation may provide another opportunity to reflect on the extent to which programme coherence is being achieved as part of internal quality assurance. It also helps to identify possibilities for integrated assessment, where one assessment product could be used to assess a number of outcomes that are common to more than one module.

Constructive Alignment

Programme teams may also draw on the substantial body of literature and guidelines on "constructive alignment" in pursuing programme coherence. As currently articulated, the constructive alignment model is attributed to Biggs (1999) but the essentials can be traced back to Tyler (1949), and developed later by Shuell (1986).

Creating an optimum correspondence between outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment through a learner-centred approach provides the rationale for "constructive alignment". It is based on the twin principles of constructivism in learning and alignment in the design of teaching and assessment. Learning is constructivist, where it involves students constructing meaning through relevant learning activities, as opposed to having it imparted or transmitted. As part of its internal QA, programme teams are therefore prompted to consider the extent to which students are actively involved in the learning process.

The second element, "alignment" refers to the correspondence or match between the intended learning outcomes, the teaching and learning activities, and the assessment tasks used to verify that the intended outcomes have been achieved. The alignment is achieved by ensuring that the verb in the learning outcome statement is present in the teaching/learning activity and in the assessment task. In other words, the verb in the intended learning outcome determines what the teaching/learning activities might be and what the student needs to perform in the assessment task. In setting up an aligned system therefore, there are thus four major steps:

- 1. Define the intended learning outcomes;
- 2. Choose teaching/learning activities likely to lead to the learning outcomes;

3. Assess students' actual learning outcomes to see how well they match what was intended;

4. Arrive at a final assessment.

But an important point to remember is the fact that this alignment is pursued in a context where the student has an active role in the learning experience. As indicated earlier, Standard 1.3 from the ESG relates to both of these elements (constructivism and alignment) as it specifically refers to the role of students in being "active" in the process.

Of course learning outcomes can be achieved to a greater or lesser extent. A key issue for programme providers therefore is knowing what level of performance is required to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes. This requires descriptions of performance, usually at varying levels of accomplishment. This level of detail cannot be captured in the verb used in the learning outcomes but requires elaboration separately in grading rubrics and grade descriptors, thereby helping teachers and students know exactly what is expected in terms of demonstrating the learning.

The use of grading rubrics is therefore an important step in the pursuit of programme coherence and their preparation can prompt teachers to further think about achieving optimum alignment between the three programme components (learning outcomes, teaching and learning, and assessment). It is a way therefore of making manifest the third standard from the ESG, "student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment", (1.3), while linking to most if not all of the remaining standards. This is therefore a further illustration of how programme coherence is so all-encompassing.

But of course, communicating the expected learning outcomes is not without its challenges. Programme staff may invest much energy in the production of rubrics, but these may not be fully understood by student, and may say little to students about what exactly is required to perform at an excellent level.

A second problem relates to the kind of knowledge that HEI programmes may tend to favour. For example, Biggs and Tang (2007) note that the knowledge that is privileged is declarative rather than functioning: "Curricula in many universities are overwhelmingly declarative with teaching methods correspondingly expository" (Biggs and Tang 2007, 72). If the forms of understanding encouraged by teaching and assessment are not those that are educationally relevant (and professionally in the case of PHE) as expressed in the intended learning outcomes, then programme coherence is jeopardised. Students may focus on surface learning strategies that will guarantee examination success, but not enable them to solve complex problems once they graduate: "To use our learning in order to negotiate with the world and to see it differently involves understanding of a high order" (Biggs and Tang 2007, 75). The challenge therefore is to conceive intended learning outcomes in terms of these performances of understanding, rather than in verbal declarations of understanding.

Taxonomies and Frameworks

One way to safeguard against a restricted use of knowledge and surface learning is the use of taxonomies. However, before developing this argument, it is worth referring to the criticism that is often made with regard to learning outcomes and the taxonomies upon which learning outcomes draw.

This criticism is based on the view that such an approach is associated with what Ball(1998, 74) calls "the commodification of education" and a managerialist ideology (Clarke and Newman 1997). Knowledge becomes commodified and discussed in terms of efficiency and exchange value. They also question the functional analysis used to devise programmes based on a learning-needs analysis of the graduates. The learning outcome paradigm is viewed as leading to "significant gaps in knowledge domain, learning and teaching quality" and to "significant epistemological and pedagogical insights that remain hidden and inarticulate" (O'Brien and Brancaleone 2011, 5).

Much of the criticism has been directed at the influence of the taxonomy of educational objectives for the cognitive domain developed in the 1950s (Bloom et al., 1956). Such a model is seen as promoting a linear, hierarchical and restricted view of learning, with the result that "if presented in a sufficiently inflexible, positivist manner, learning outcomes can limit serious question or challenge" (O'Brien and Brancaleone 2011, 10).

It is certainly the case that the ECTS users guide produced in support of the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) derives from the original work for the cognitive domain (Bloom et al. 1956). But there is also ongoing work on taxonomies that can be used to improve programme design, and therefore support programme coherence and alignment.

One more recent example is the SOLO taxonomy - structure of the observed learning outcome - (Biggs and Collis 1982) reflecting how the outcomes of student learning display similar stages of increasing structural complexity, regardless of the academic discipline, so that the new knowledge becomes gradually integrated into a structural pattern. SOLO provides a systematic way of describing how a learner's performance grows in complexity and can be used to describe where students should be operating, and where they are actually are operating.

However, a more recent taxonomy, which addresses more directly concerns such as those outlined above is the revision of the taxonomy developed by Bloom and his collaborators back in 1956 (Anderson et al., 2005). The revised taxonomy features a two-dimensional table, with the horizontal dimension being a modification of the original, where verbs replace the noun forms in the category labels: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create. The vertical dimension consists of four types of knowledge: factual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, procedural knowledge, and metacognitive knowledge. It therefore examines objectives or outcomes in terms of both knowledge and cognitive processes, thereby providing a more accurate estimate of alignment between what is planned, what is taught and what is assessed.

	Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyse	Evaluate	Create
Factual						
Conceptual						
Procedural						
Metacognitive						

Table 2: Revised taxonomy for the cognitive domain

It is also noteworthy that the revised taxonomy replaces 'synthesis' from the 1956 taxonomy with "create", reflecting the constructivist theory underpinning "constructive alignment", that synthesising and integrating knowledge amounts to the creation of new knowledge (de Paor, 2009). While the revised taxonomy is no longer hierarchical in nature, it is also noteworthy that "create" is placed at the very top position, with "evaluate" below it.

Backward Mapping and Facets of Understanding -UbD

The inclusion of the cognitive process dimension also serves to address misgivings many commentators, including Biggs and Tang (2007), have about the inadequacy of "understand" as an outcome for learning – because it is not explicit enough. However, it is also worth considering that other curriculum designers have a more positive assessment of the usefulness of "understanding" in planning for the optimum match between teaching, learning and assessment.

The framework for curriculum planning known as Understanding by Design (UbD) (Wiggins and McTighe 2004) includes a particular focus on planning for understanding in curriculum and assessment and in distinguishing between different types of understanding. Although designed with compulsory schooling in mind, it can provide curriculum mappers with a useful instrument for checking the extent to which a programme design enables students to develop the kinds of understanding expected of graduates in higher education today.

The UbD framework includes six different "facets of understanding" based on the view that students truly understand when they can: (1) explain; (2) interpret; (3) apply; (4) have perspective; (5) empathize; (6) show self-knowledge. This could be used therefore in a curriculum mapping exercise to gauge the extent to which a programme develops each of the facets coherently, not just included in the learning outcomes but in teaching activities and assessment. This also provides the basis for a much richer educational experience, and address the criticism levelled at rational approaches to curriculum planning which are seen as being too much about prescription in advance, and therefore curtailing the spontaneity, dynamism and richness of truly educational encounters (Knight 2001).

The UbD framework is based on another kind of mapping, referred to as "backward mapping", which, just like much of the theory of curriculum mapping, can also be traced back to Tyler's seminal work *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949). Its use in curriculum practice today is attributed to the work of Wiggins and McTighe who are widely considered to have popularized it for the modern era.

The backward design process begins with the end in mind, i.e. the desired results (goals or standards)- and then derives the curriculum from the evidence of learning (performances) called for by the standard and the teaching needed to equip students to perform (Wiggins and McTighe, 2004). Achieving coherence between assessment and the other component parts is a key issue, with the acronym GRASPS focusing attention on constructing authentic scenarios for performance tasks, starting with the intended learning:

- Goal: intended learning outcome
- Role: role the student plays in the learning scenario or activity
- Audience: audience/client that the student must be concerned with in doing the task
- Situation: particular setting and its constraints and opportunities
- Performance: specific performance or product expected
- Standards and criteria: clear picture of successful performance

Assessment tasks should therefore provide an opportunity for the students to demonstrate the learning that is intended, rather than carry out assessment tasks that are disconnected from either the intended learning or the teaching and learning activities. This priority could go some way towards ensuring that assessment is meaningful and coheres sufficiently with the other elements in the programme. This is very often a criticism of the rational model of curriculum planning (Knight 2001). Ironically, therefore the UbD framework, which could be considered a rational and systematic approach to curriculum design, actually emphasises the need for assessment tasks that are coherent.

One other benefit from such a model of curriculum planning is the manner in which it is not confined to the cognitive domain, but rather represents a certain integration with the affective domain also. Over the years, the affective domain has been the focus of separate treatment to the cognitive domain, resulting in a separate taxonomy soon after the cognitive (Krathwohl et al. 1964). However, separate treatment is recognised as being no longer in keeping with what is expected of graduates who need to draw on a wide range of skills, competences and learning dispositions in today's world- for example, teamwork, intercultural competence, initiative, enthusiasm, risk-taking, consensus building. These all require a focus on attitudinal development.

Conclusion

These examples illustrate therefore how internal quality assurance can be enhanced by a greater focus on programme coherence. The main way to pursue this coherence is through a curriculum mapping process focused on arriving at a greater alignment between intended learning, teaching and learning activities, and assessment. It could involve, for example, HEIs being asked to map their programme outcomes, activities and assessment against the categories of knowledge, skills and competences in the European Qualification Framework, or against national frameworks or drawing on curriculum models or taxonomies such as those presented.

As noted earlier, dialogue and collaboration is a key part of the mapping process undertaken by programme teams (Hale and Dunlap 2010, 18). This can in turn constitute a line of enquiry in external QA, i.e. requiring HEIs to indicate not only how it ensures that programme coherence is achieved, but also how it involves the various stakeholders, including students in establishing and maintaining this coherence. And in the interests of closing the feedback loop, HEIs could document how producing curriculum maps, as part of ongoing review, were used in followup actions- for example, in module revision, or in extending membership of course boards to a student representative. The effective use of such practices can provide a robust measure of the extent to which HEI programmes meet the very first standard in external QA, i.e. "the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG" (2.1).

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