



# Impact Evaluation of Quality Assurance in Higher Education: How Can it Help to Improve Organization and Learning and Teaching?

DR. ZÁDORI IVÁN PHD

UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS

FACULTY OF CULTURAL SCIENCES, EDUCATION AND  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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- ▶ Quality assurance, evaluation processes, learning and teaching challenges of higher education in Central-Eastern Europe and Romania
  - ▶ Improvement of normal, everyday operation of organizations and continuous improvement of learning and teaching
  - ▶ Emerging issues, experiences, future challenges of quality assurance

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- ▶ Central-Eastern Europe: similarities in higher education
  - ▶ Challenges of political changes of the 1990s, transition economy, social changes, globalization and European Union
  - ▶ Expansion of education institutions and programs meet the market needs (public/private)
  - ▶ Quality assurance: more and more important
  - ▶ Internal and external quality evaluation, assurance commissions

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- ▶ Periodical character of evaluation: real organizational culture?
  - ▶ Self evaluations: it seems that almost everything is in order...
  - ▶ Behind the curtain: challenges and problems institutions face with

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- ▶ Institutional-financial sustainability, resources for activities
  - ▶ Changing level of financial resources, financial instability and insecurity, unpredictable situations: permanent adaptation challenges
  - ▶ Fund-raising, projects or other extra budget incomes
  - ▶ Human resources background?
  - ▶ Several 'university' processes have no relationship with the academic world....
  - ▶ Demographic processes: influence number of students, institutional capacity, human and financial resources

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- ▶ traditional role of universities: knowledge transfer, reproduction of next elite generation, satisfying the needs of labor market, research, academic activities
  - ▶ New orientation – extra budget incomes?
  - ▶ Changes in funding policies, strategies, techniques of the state, centralization/decentralization, changing level of autonomy, exact role of the state?
  - ▶ To implement and realize 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 potential students, etc.);
- ▶ Universities permanently have to invest in 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 parallel with organizational goals;
- ▶ Universities have to exploit more intensively the potential of teachers and students with offering more educational programs, scientific and cultural events to the public;
- ▶ Universities permanently have to manage their national and international partnerships, cooperations and should establish new partnerships with institutions, associations, companies;
- ▶ For national, 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 real process, not just a needed activity at accreditation and external evaluation;
- ▶ Place of quality assurance within the organization has to be clear;
- ▶ Universities have to deal with social responsibility, third mission of higher education institutions;
- ▶ Universities have to reduce the existing gaps between the missions, objectives, strategies and practices, 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 have 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 local and international market.

# Emerging Issues

- ▶ Global economic, social and environmental processes: more and more intensive efforts in different fields and different levels to react the challenges and negative feedbacks of the activities of humankind: 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

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- ▶ Foreign students, foreign language educational programs – strong competition in Central-Eastern Europe – beside some very highly ranked universities, most of the students are not the best of the best (lower financial background);
  - ▶ Not every university has the same possibilities, and perfect portfolio to attract students;
  - ▶ it is also important to know our students, markets, market needs, motivations why they learn abroad? On the other hand quality assurance is needed very much (lack of language skills - Hungarian examples!);
  - ▶ Flexibility/overflexible educational programs because of incomes, worst scenario: paper factories;
  - ▶ Incoming/outgoing students – intensifying student mobility, increase the quality of students;

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- ▶ Need for global competencies, global education, global citizenship education (not just language competences!);
  - ▶ E-learning challenges: MOOC (massive open online courses) - easy to say to start but this is not a pdf file on the website, time, money, energy, and a new way of thinking is needed to create – how to make money from it, and it would change the education in the next years?
  - ▶ New groups are in focus parallel with the traditional markets (senior generation, highschool students, adult learning, nonformal education, studytour, short cycle programs);

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- ▶ Innovations, experience learning, new forms and types of education (Semester at sea – Colorado State University);
  - ▶ Expanding partnerships, dual degree/joint degree programs;
  - ▶ Migration affects?
  - ▶ New set of tools are needed, traditional learning is changing – less, or no need for books...
  - ▶ New generation, new types of students – probably face with the global economic, social and environmental problems – new knowledge elements are needed.

# Conclusion

- ▶ The 21st century: period of the knowledge based economy and society
- ▶ More and more people realize this all over the world from different point 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

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- ▶ 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;*
    - ▶ *Clear signal for the stakeholders and governmental bodies – external environment;*
    - ▶ *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?*

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- ▶ *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' need and expectations;*
  - ▶ *Institutional diversification, specialization, new strategic orientation;*
  - ▶ *From external evaluation to the external assistance: help real institutional quality assurance;*
  - ▶ *More flexible accreditation system: help institutions to develop new educational programs.*

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- ▶ 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

**Thank You For Your Attention!**

[zadori.ivan@kpvk.pte.hu](mailto:zadori.ivan@kpvk.pte.hu)