

Quality Assurance Review for Higher Education

Utilizarea modelului EFQM 2020 pentru procesul de management al participării părților interesate în învățământul superior

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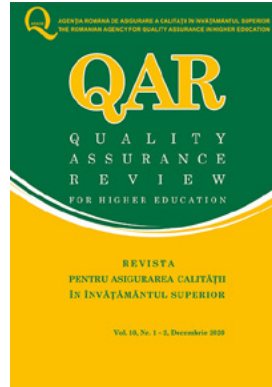
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Using the EFQM 2020 Model for Stakeholder Management in Higher Education

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Rezumat: Scopul studiului este acela de a înțelege procesul de management al părților interesate, folosind modelul EFQM 2020 (n.e. European Framework for Quality Management - Cadrul european pentru managementul calității) pentru autoevaluarea instituțională și pentru evaluările externe. Cercetarea are drept obiectiv să exploreze ESG 2015 (n.e. European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area - Standarde și linii directoare pentru asigurarea calității în Spațiul European al Învățământului Superior) din perspectiva părților interesate, următoarea etapă fiind aceea de a compara filosofia acestora cu modelul EFQM 2020. Următorul obiectiv al cercetării se referă la explorarea diferențelor privind părțile interesate, utilizând abordarea EFQM 2020, pentru a poziționa ecosisteme în cazul universităților publice și private, în vederea identificării principalelor părți interesate. Cercetarea intenționează să ofere un nou impuls pentru formularea politicilor, în cazul agențiilor de acreditare, a desfășurării activității membrilor echipelor de evaluare, precum și a instituțiilor, folosind modelul EFQM al managementului strategic performant.

Cuvinte cheie: părți interesate, Standarde și linii directoare 2015, modelul EFQM 2020, management strategic performant

Abstract: The aim of the study is to understand stakeholder management process using EFQM 2020 model for institutional self-evaluation and external evaluations. The research is aimed to explore the ESG 2015 standard from the stakeholder aspect, the next task is to compare its philosophy with EFQM 2020 model criteria concerning stakeholders. The next level is exploring the stakeholder differences using EFQM 2020 approach for mapping ecosystems in the case of public, private and private university institutional segment to clear Key stakeholders. The research aims to offer new impetus for policy formulation in the case of accreditation agencies and evaluation member teams as well as institutions using the EFQM 2020 strategic management performance model.

Keywords: stakeholders, ESG 2015, EFQM 2020 model, strategic management performance

Preamble

During the accreditation processes one of the most problematic questions for the visiting expert group is to evaluate the performance of universities considering stakeholders' expectations, needs, involvement and satisfaction with university services. But how to define the segments of stakeholders in a concrete case?

I. Stakeholders by the ESG 2015 Standards – a Comparative Overview

The ESG 2015 mention stakeholders as one of the four principles of quality assurance in the EHEA: „*quality assurance takes into account the needs and expectations of students, all other stakeholders and society*” (ESG 2015, p. 8). In ESG 2015, part 1 addresses institutions, part 2 external accreditation processes and part 3 agencies, also including how the role and involvement of stakeholders should be understood:

- As specified in the ESG, section I. Context, scope, purposes and principles, related to the concept of quality assurance, „*Unless otherwise is specified in the document, stakeholders are understood to cover all actors within an institution, including students and staff, as well as external stakeholders such as employers and external partners of an institution*” (ESG 2015, p. 7). In connection with quality assurance and applicability of ESG, it is also mentioned that „*Therefore, **stakeholders**, who may prioritize different purposes, can view quality in higher education differently and quality assurance needs to take into account these different perspectives*” (ESG 2015, p. 7). Regarding policy for quality assurance, as per ESG 1.1 „*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, p. 11).
- For external evaluations, in ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose it is stated that „*External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. **Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement***” (ESG 2015, p. 18).
- As per ESG 3.1. Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance, the role and position of stakeholders is also well defined: „*Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These*

should be translated into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work” (ESG 2015, p. 22).

As we can see, ESG 2015, is speaking about three types of stakeholders: institutional/internal stakeholders, external stakeholders, those involved in designing procedural methodology and agency’s own organizational stakeholders. If we evaluate their tasks, they are different in three levels:

1. University’s task is to identify the internal and external stakeholders; the quality is part of their strategic management and made primarily by internal stakeholders, involving also external stakeholders.
2. Agencies must involve the stakeholders for designing Guidelines for institutions and Guidelines for evaluators, but also in their decision-making bodies. In ESG there is no clear idea about the grouping (or: “segmentation”) of stakeholders, there is also no guidance for understanding differences of institution groups.
3. At the Agency level, there is no clear segmentation concerning stakeholders.

If we are working on institutional level accreditations, we must understand that the tasks concerning stakeholder segmentation and engagement are common, as in the understanding of ESG 2015: in fact the stakeholders are all the participating actors. As a consequence, the following problems have to be mentioned:

- The universities are engaged in education, research and community development. Therefore, the different services are concerning different stakeholders.
- For the agencies, how are the members of external evaluation groups trained for understanding differentiation of stakeholders in the case of universities with sectoral or specific mission differences?
- For the outcome of the external evaluation, how to write an evaluation document, forward and support it to decision makers, reporting about the responsiveness and accountability of the university?

II. Rationale for Using the EFQM 2015 Model for Analysing Stakeholders’ Management and Participation

The academic writings and studies about stakeholders are mostly comprehensive and give little guidance for the actors of accreditation evaluation services. The EFQM 2020 model gives a new impetus for understanding the stakeholder management policies.

The EFQM 2020 model is a globally recognized framework that supports organisations in managing change and improving performance. The 2020 model stresses the importance of the primacy of customer, the need to take a long-term stakeholder centric view, understanding the cause – effect linkages for the planning, the execution and the performance level of activities of the universities. The model is a self-evaluation system, and consists of three parts: direction setting, execution management, and exploring results (EFQM 2020 model, available at: <https://mailchi.mp/7703bd3f60fd/qqr7x5leq>).

According to EFQM Criterion 3. Engaging stakeholders’ description, “Having decided which Stakeholders are the most important to the organisation, i.e. its Key Stakeholders, and independence of the specific groups identified, it is highly likely that there is a degree of similarity in applying the following principles when engaging with Key Stakeholders. Consequently, an outstanding organisation could be recognized as the one which:

- Identifies the specific types and categories within each of its Key Stakeholder Groups;
- Uses its understanding of Key Stakeholders needs and expectations to achieve continued engagement;
- Involves Key Stakeholders in deploying its Strategy and Creating Sustainable Value and recognises the contributions they make;
- Builds, maintains and further develops the relationship with Key Stakeholders based on transparency, accountability, ethical behaviour and trust;
- Works with its Key Stakeholders to develop a common understanding and focus on how, through co-development, it can contribute to, and draw inspiration from, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Global Compact ambitions;
- Actively gathers the perceptions of its Key Stakeholders rather than waiting for them to make contact;
- Evaluates its performance in relation to Key Stakeholders needs and decides on the appropriate actions to be taken to help secure its future, as perceived by these Key Stakeholders”.

III. Using EFQM 2015 Model in Conjunction with Stakeholders’ Participation as Required by ESG 2015

The possible use of the EFQM model is analysed in more detail, against provisions of ESG 2015, aiming to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this model in the context of the EHEA.

III.1 ESG Part 1 and EFQM Model

Comparing it with ESG 1.1, the EFQM focuses on strategic management, as does the ESG 2015, but the latter does not give criteria for strategic management, with only one compulsory part of it, namely The Quality Policy. While ESG 2015 very often mentions together all actors, the EFQM 2020 description makes differences between „stakeholders” and „**key stakeholders**” and also between objectives concerning the customer management.

Identifying Key Stakeholders According to the Three Missions of Higher Education. Differences and Similarities in University Key Stakeholders

Beneficiaries of higher education and participants, termed also in a more market-oriented terminology as “customers”, are identified (procedure termed as grouping or segmentation) according to their involvement/interest concerning education, research and to what it is known as the 3rd mission of higher education - related to society and building sustainable relationships. The groups identified and the role of quality assurance tasks for them are as follows:

1. **People:** detailed segmentation concerning teachers, professional service workers, researchers and research service professionals, 3rd mission developers, advisers and service professionals as well as service professionals. The quality assurance task is to attract, engage, develop, retain.
2. **Business and governing stakeholders:** the segmentation should reflect the missions of the university, described briefly as education, research and the 3rd mission. The quality assurance task is to secure and sustain ongoing support.
3. **Society:** the segmentation reflects the mission of the university – focusing on the ecosystem, and the quality assurance task is contribution to development, well-being and prosperity to the ecosystem.
4. **Partners and Suppliers:** segmenting partners and suppliers by education, research and the 3rd task. Quality assurance task is to build relationship and ensure support for creating sustainable value.

The EFQM 2020 is a performance model for different types of organization. An organization with excellent quality orientation has to create and deliver sustainable value proposals for its stakeholders, mostly for customers and all actors in its ecosystem. In the case of universities, their primary task is defining their own ecosystem framework, with description and mapping, which might differ significantly:

- The **national state universities** have different ecosystems. They are mainly research universities or universities with mixed and regional function, they are universities of regionally focus and professionally oriented. The so called

„special focus institutions”, such as universities of art, health sciences, public administration etc. often have an additional role beyond teaching, education and research, which could be described as 3rd function (art performances, exhibitions, maintaining clinics, and other services). The stakeholders in these cases are different.

- The **church-supported universities** differ in their ecosystem: there are cases when the owner influences only the civilizational content of education and research and community services (it can be other as well as scientific, it may be faith based so it can differ in its knowledge networks). In other case, in the governance model the church representatives are present in the leadership and they perform the parts of value creation process. In the third case, the HEI is part of the church community and the main goal is to serve the community. In these three models the ecosystems are different. In the last case, the question is how the university can maintain its autonomous existence, the second case’s main question is how we can divide the educational and research function from the 3rd function. In the first cases the ecosystem can be described similarly to special focused universities.
- In the case of **privately owned**, or **universities with special purpose**, the ecosystem depends on the funding/maintainer’s nature. It can be a university with inner or foreign political aim: People’s Friendship University of Russia founded in 1960 in Moscow, the European University Institute (EUI), the Central European University (1995) can be treated as transnational because of foreign financial resources or specific political or normative goals. They have different ecosystems, different customers, different stakeholders.
- The **other type of universities** may represent either a specific investment group or specific local shareholders. They can be elite, or demand driven. In case of Asian countries, they are common and formed by specific local or transnational ecosystems.
- It will be very difficult at this stage to map the ecosystem of **newly formed consortia**, the so-called European Universities, formed by the European University Initiative, working as networks in EHEA.

Thus, in the case of accreditation the key question is to understand the university mission, its ecosystem, main goals and objectives in the ecosystem, and making the map of stakeholders from strategic management documents. The Leadership of the university – should provide as a point of reference a clear picture on how the institution defines and understands the key stakeholders. If the Introduction of the Self Evaluation Report is the ecosystem description, then the university and external evaluation experts can clearly have a common picture of who can be involved and measured by quality services.

Improving Accreditation Processes

The evaluations in the case of accreditation must cover the planning processes as it is offered by EFQM 2020 model:

- **Planning phase:** Universities must differentiate key stakeholders, identify their potential for the university goal setting, identify their needs and expectations, analyse their behaviour, influence factor, study their competencies. It is very important to understand how they can influence the strategic management. In a lagged-behind environment nor students, nor people, nor local environment can be competent for ‘international excellence’ goals neither in education, nor in research. It is likely that universities of special purpose can be more easily accredited with an international mission.
- **Execution phase:** The quality aims described above for different groups need detailed description of engagement. The model offers new ideas for building sustainable relationships with customer segments, users and persons at the different touchpoints of customer journey maps¹, prosumers² and persons and groups involved in what is called in economic terms “buying decisions”. We believe that the so-called evaluation of teachers by student-type of engagement does not give proof of a sustainable relationship. ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct require that agencies „... insure that their services to institutions and society are optimal” To make a comparison, the B group of EFQM 2020 criteria is about value creation for different stakeholders, designing value, communicating, delivering it, and managing service experience.
- **Performance phase:** ESG 2015 do not indicate criteria for evaluating university performance for stakeholder management policies. This makes it more convenient for universities to limit the measurement only for key stakeholders. However, Thus, without measuring the needs and expectation of more stakeholders, they cannot involve them in planning, execution and performance evaluation. The evaluation must cover the analysis for predicting the future, the perception and estimation of results concerning stakeholders.

The EFQM 2020 model is the universally accepted model for European countries, and globally as well. The new model gives a good help for universities in their strategic management model. The next task is to educate university leaders, university managers and quality service managers on philosophies, approaches and methods of strategic management since the EFQM 2020 gives a very rich assembly

¹ A customer journey map tells the story of the customer’s experience: from initial contact, through the process of engagement and into a long-term relationship.

² A consumer who becomes involved with designing or customizing products for their own needs.

of them in different criteria. In every EU country there are national EFQM offices where they can reach expert advice services.

III.2 ESG Part II and EFQM Model

The role of the Key stakeholders in the case of *external evaluation procedures and methodology*. The main task of agencies is to identify the groups of universities, who can be treated as ones involving, managing and maintaining groups of stakeholders, to develop methodologies based on understanding and to evaluate differently by such ecosystem universities. Therefore, it is important to understand the different evaluation methodologies to help decision-making bodies.

The groups of Key stakeholders for developing procedural methodologies can be identified as:

1. **Customers:** different segments of universities, research customers and communities.
2. **People:** voluntary visiting expert bodies, professionals for evaluation for the sector, results decision-preparing group, public information and results-communicating administrative personnel.
3. **Business and governmental people:** institutional development plan guidance people, influencer groups of business model and strategic management approaches, different generations and standard or model expert communities of quality science, public policy evaluation experts.
4. **Society:** those groups who are symbolic and powerful parts of the ecosystem – state regulators (national Bologna-governance groups), regional governments, industrial innovation ecosystem actors, transnational or governmental or local academies, faith-based community associations maintaining universities, media actors.
5. **Partners and suppliers:** other evaluation communities as European Organization for Quality (EOQ) national organizations, EFQM or Common Assessment Framework (CAF) model experts, faith based accrediting agencies or corporate university experts.

So, every institution can be evaluated in its ecosystem, and how the quality management system reflects and supports the mission, strategic management planning and performance results.

The phases of procedure level (planning, execution and performance evaluation) needs detailed and well-designed preparation (the guidance should be focused on strategic management and strategic quality management, otherwise it could cause a sink of universities in micromanagement practices), training for the visiting group of evaluators on ecosystem and strategic management thinking, documenting the evaluation with facts, description of process of evaluation, advices for development

for strategic purpose – do not let them writing accreditation telenovels! To reach the goal of performance evaluations, the expert group should use procedures designed and fit for profile: research universities, mixed or universities of applied sciences, special profile focused universities.

III.3 ESG Part 3 and EFQM Model

The Key stakeholders in case of Agency's own organization were identified as:

1. **Key Customers:** universities, doctoral schools, professors and different governmental agencies (QUANGOS³).
2. **Governing bodies and business actors:** bodies whose decisions and regulatory activities can influence the accreditation services and agency's status. Among them are the parliamentary committees, National Chambers of Commerce, governmental innovation and academic founding and normative policy actors, people (administration, functional decision helping committee members, and decision-making body members, external bodies).
3. **People:** evaluating professionals who work in agencies, administrative and part-time expert people, voluntary experts who work in different visiting expert teams, expert-group voluntary professionals in education or research committees.
4. **Society:** media, national academies, professional interest groups, different influencer groups.
5. **Partners and suppliers:** HE governmental data base offices, Rector's Conference and other bodies and NGOs, Erasmus project teams, with governmental higher education functions or projects, research excellence evaluation experts.

The accreditation agencies can draw a good reputation with adopting a policy paper for identifying, planning, execution and performance evaluation of stakeholders for all the three parts of ESG 2015 and subsequent criteria.

The quality evaluation process needs professional strategic management, knowledge and skills from institutions, external visiting evaluation expert groups and agency professional and evaluating teams as well. The ESG 2015 does not speak about the model, it doesn't prescribe how the national accreditation governance regime is built up for complex stakeholder management, but it is expecting it must be done professionally. As the agencies administrative personnel must have professional evaluation knowledge, they need knowledge and skills to evaluate on the basis of professional strategic management approaches. The EFQM 2020 model is excellent from this point of view.

³ Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organizations.

Postscript

The EFQM 2020 is about responsibility and ecosystem services concerning UN Sustainable Development Goals and UN Global Compact for Responsible Management. The contents aspect of the stakeholder management is to manage the whole ecosystem by university goals setting for these societal aims. Without responsible strategic management, its stakeholder and quality management these aims cannot be met.

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