

Elements of a Culture of Quality in the Implementation of Quality Assurance Systems of Countries in the European Higher Education Area

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Abstract : The implementation of quality management systems in higher education in different countries is determined by national regulatory choices and supranational indications (such as the European Standard Guidelines for Quality Assurance). The effective functioning and transformative capacity of these quality management systems largely depend on the organizational context in which they are applied and, more specifically, on the culture of quality developed in single universities or in single countries. The University's concept of quality culture integrates the structural dimension of QA (quality management manuals, process definitions, tools) with the value dimension of an organization (principles, skills, and attitudes). Within the EHEA (European Higher Education Area), countries such as Portugal, the Netherlands, the UK, and Norway demonstrate a greater integration of QA principles in the various organizational levels and areas of competence of university institutions or have greater experience in implementation or scientific and political debate on the matter. Therefore, the study, through an integrative literature review, of the quality management systems of these countries is aimed at determining a framework of the culture of quality, helpful in defining the elements which, both in structural-organizational terms and in terms of values and skills and attitudes, have proved to be factors of success in the effective implementation of quality assurance systems in universities and in the countries considered in the research. In order for a QA system to effectively aim for continuous improvement in a complex and dynamic context such as the university one, it must embrace a holistic vision of quality from an integrative perspective, focusing on the objective of transforming the reality being evaluated.

Keywords : higher education, quality assurance, quality culture, Portugal, Norway, Netherlands, United Kingdom

Conference Title : ICQM 2023 : International Conference on Quality Management

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : December 11-12, 2023