

Knowledge Transfer in Higher Education Quality Management: The Case of Germany and Slovakia

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Abstract

The last two decades have been characterized by a fundamental change in the approaches, tools and instruments in the quality management at Higher Education Institutions. Comparison of two Higher Education Institutions in the Slovak Republic and Germany highlights similarities and trends in quality assurance. Both case studies show how multifaceted the quality management is, and the needs to be approached if a meaningful progress is to be made. Complexity has to be explicitly recognized and built into the approach chosen. Higher Education Institutions have to develop internal quality assurance processes. Quality culture is key for addressing the challenges.

Key words

Higher Education Institutions; European Union policies; quality assurance in Higher Education; best practices in Higher Education quality management

JEL Classification: A22, A23, I23

Introduction

In 1998, the Council of the EU provided an impetus to Europe-wide cooperation in the field of Higher Education quality assurance by inviting the Member States to introduce/reinforce quality assurance systems as well as encouraging exchange of experience/best practices in the Higher Education quality management since the quality assurance models vary within the European Union. Subsequently, modernisation³ of Higher Education Institutions in Europe has been acknowledged both, as a crucial prerequisite for the success of the broader Lisbon Strategy for growth & jobs as well as an essential element in shifting towards an ever global and knowledge-based economy.⁴

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³ Three reform targets have been identified in the Commission *Communication on Delivering the Modernisation Agenda for universities: education, research and innovation* (COM(2006) 208 final): curricula – governance (incl. enhanced quality assurance) – funding. Source: Commission (2009), p. 124.

⁴ Following the creation of the *European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)* in 2008, the Commission assessed progress in the development of quality assurance systems in Member States & EU-wide cooperation in its first triennial report published in September 2009. Furthermore, it is fostering research into the feasibility of a **European Global University Ranking** with initial results and testing projected in the foreseeable future. Source: Commission (2009), p. 24.

The aim of this paper is to facilitate a knowledge transfer in Higher Education Quality Management embodied in the lessons learned in the process of quality assurance at German¹ Higher Education Institution with extensive **internationalization** (University of Applied Sciences Osnabrueck – particularly Faculty of Business Management and Social Sciences) that would be applicable in a Slovak² Higher Education Institution seeking reinforcement of its international recognition (University of Economics in Bratislava and Faculty of Commerce as its integral part)³. Both, the Information Handbook we refer to in this paper as well as additional outputs of the **European Social Fund Project *Integrated System of Quality Assurance and Improvement at UEB*** reflect recent developments in the European Union policies concerning such issues as promoting quality within the European Higher Education Area.

1 A fundamental transformation of the debate on quality in Higher Education

1.1 Changes in the Slovak Republic

In recent decades universities and colleges in most CEE transition countries have been expected to initiate profound changes in the society, to be involved in outlining or reviewing strategic development trends as well as to actively participate in their implementation besides engaging in leading scientific projects and empirical studies (Baláž & Zábajník, 2009)⁴.

In 2008, most Higher Education Institutions in Slovakia have become subject to a comprehensive accreditation process meant to categorize them pursuant to the Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education as amended. Comprehensive accreditation seeks to evaluate teaching, R&D, art-⁵ or creativity-related activities as well as policies (staffing, IT, etc.) of Higher Education Institutions on the basis of objective methods derived from internationally accepted criteria and parameters (Mikolaj, 2010).⁶ 2008 Annual report of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic states annual reports mapping activities of Higher Education Institutions in 2008 do not imply institutionalisation of systematic quality assurance; hence, the Ministry deems appropriate to foster Higher Education Institution projects intended for development of internal quality as-

¹ Higher education attainment (age 30-34) in Germany rose from 25.7% in 2000 (22.4% EU average) to 27.7% in 2008 (31.1% EU average) with 40% as the 2020 EU benchmark. Commission (2009), p. 153.

² Higher education attainment (age 30-34) in Slovakia increased from 10.6% in 2000 (22.4% EU average) to 15.8% in 2008 (31.1% EU average) with 40% as the 2020 EU benchmark. Commission (2009), p. 231.

³ European Commission (Education and culture DG). (2009). *Erasmus, higher education: Creativity and Innovation, European Success Stories*. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/erasmus/creativity_en.pdf, p. 15.

⁴ See also: Baláž, P. (2009, July 9). Ako je to s kvalitou vysokých škôl na Slovensku. *Trend : týždenník o ekonomike a podnikaní*, 19(27), 70-71.; Baláž, P. (2008). Reforma vysokoškolského vzdelávania – predpoklad budovania vedomostnej ekonomiky. In *Vedomostná ekonomika vo väzbe na hospodársky rast regiónov : 8. konferencia o francúzsko-slovenskej decentralizovanej spolupráci*, Trenčín 28-29 June 2007 (pp. 177-181). Nitra: ENIGMA.

⁵ if applicable

⁶ Slovak Minister of Education Ján Mikolaj, furthermore, believes comprehensive accreditation provided for a framework ceiling regarding the number of students enrolled, with HEIs now steering their attention towards continuity of academic potential in terms of qualification structures.

insurance systems in line with the European standards and recommendations (Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, 2009, p. 28).⁷

1.2 A new look at quality in Higher Education in Germany

The last twenty years have been characterized by very fundamental changes in Higher Education in Germany in general and in the way quality issues are perceived (Mayer & Ziegele, 2009). The debate in many areas of public policy increasingly highlighted quality differences, the need for a more competitive framework when allocating scarce resources, and the need for new forms of ensuring accountability and improvement. This has had very profound implications for Higher Education in Germany. The idea (and myth) of all Higher Education Institutions being equal was substituted by recognition of quality differences, and an increasing recognition of competition being important as a mechanism for driving change. The rankings highlighting differences increasingly dominated the public discourse on Higher Education. The introduction of formalized accreditation processes as part of the Bologna process changed the way quality issues were perceived (Kaufmann, 2009). Neither the automatic presumption of Higher Education Institutions offering high quality services, nor intransparent procedures between the ministries in charge of Higher Education and the Higher Education Institutions themselves were considered acceptable any more. Accreditation was made mandatory, be it the accreditation of programmes, of whole institutions or nowadays the accreditation of the quality management system adopted. These changes had substantial implications on how Higher Education Institutions approached the matter of quality assurance.

Both countries' approaches have been substantially influenced by the international discourse on quality management (Kis, 2009) and the Bologna Process.

2 Quality Assurance and Improvement System at the University of Economics in Bratislava⁸ and the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück

Established in 1940, it was renamed to the University of Economics in Bratislava (UEB) in 1992. Ten years later UEB underwent an international evaluation carried out by the *European University Association*. In 2004, all degree programmes⁹ were accred-

⁷ 2008 – 2010 National Reform Programme of the Slovak Republic envisages introduction of such tools as defining standards and recommendations, organising seminars with presentation of good practices, etc. In this context, authors wish to draw the readers' attention to the European University – Business Co-operation Thematic Forum *From the Crisis to Recovery – the Role of Higher Education Institutions and Business Co-operation* organised in partnership by the European Commission, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic and the Masaryk University in Brno on 2-3 February 2010 that debated significance of formulation and dissemination of both **good practices** (to be followed) and **bad practices** (to be avoided).

⁸ Abridged and adapted from Daňo, F., Dziurová, M., Lenghardtová, J., Sivák, R. & Strieška, L. (2008). *Information Handbook "The Quality Assurance and Improvement System at the University of Economics in Bratislava"* (Output of the ESF Project SORO/JPD 3-019/2005 ITMS code 13120120169 Integrated System of Quality Assurance and Improvement at the University of Economics in Bratislava). Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo EKONÓM.

⁹ i. e. 17 Bachelor, 29 Master and 19 Ph.D. programmes

ited in accordance with the Bologna Process, and, a follow-up European University Association evaluation process took place (2006). Currently comprising of six faculties, the University of Economics in Bratislava is a signatory of Magna Charta Universitatum and a member of various international institutions such as: the European University Association (EUA), the European Association for International Education (EAIE), the International University Association (IUA), etc. Three of its Master programmes (i. e. English; French; German – with the latter two as joint programmes) and one Bachelor programme (English/German) are taught in foreign languages.

The University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück in Germany was established in 1971 and since then has grown into one of the largest universities of applied sciences in Germany. The institution is a member of the European University Association. It is part of the network of seven influential universities of applied sciences in Germany called UAS 7. The University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück is now organized in three large faculties. The Faculty of Business Management and Social Sciences as the largest faculty with about 3.500 students offers management-related study programmes. The Faculty is internationally oriented. It offers 20 Bachelor and Master programmes. One Bachelor and two Master programmes are taught in English. In addition one Bachelor programme is offered in Shanghai (a joint programme with the Shanghai Institute of Foreign Trade).

2.1 Internal quality assurance, visions and strategies

2.1.1 Internal QAIS with regard to UEB Vision and Strategic Objectives

UEB holds a unique position in the system of Higher Education in the Slovak Republic while striving to achieve its ambitious vision stated in its *Long-term Development Plan for the Term of Office 2007-2011 with Prospects by the year 2015 (Box 1)*. This is in particular due to the following aspects:

- Historically, UEB is the first Higher Education Institution in the field of economics in the Slovak Republic;
- It is a major employer of highly-qualified academics and staff in the field of economics among Higher Education Institutions within Slovakia;
- It is a reputed Higher Education Institution in terms of employability with the largest offer of accredited study programmes in the field of economics, business and management studies and major market share.

Box 1 Extract from the Long-term Development Plan for the Term of Office 2007-2011 with Prospects by the year 2015

“Owing to the excellence in education as demonstrated, intensity and quality of research, employability of its graduates in public and private sectors, active cooperation with socio-economic practice in the course of two-way knowledge transfer, wide and effective network of international relations, achievement of a prestigious quality brand, as well as thanks to the ability of making these results visible through an efficient promotion, the University of Economics in Bratislava, which has already clearly confirmed and strengthened its position of a leader in higher education in the area of economics and management in the Slovak Republic,

is going to be viewed and recognized
as early as **in the year 2015**

as a **dynamic excellent university comparable with prestigious higher education institutions of a similar type in the European Union and as an institution with a high standard of social responsibility, which is reflected in specific projects of collaboration on national, European and global levels. The University will not only belong to the most attractive centres of higher education in the Slovak Republic, but also to the sought-after educational institutions in terms of international teacher and student mobility.”**

Source: Information Handbook „The Quality Assurance and Improvement System at the University of Economics in Bratislava“, p. 7.

Implementation of this vision is subject to concerted efforts of members of the academic community especially with respect to such transversal priorities of UEB between 2007-2011 with prospects by 2015 as:

- **Internationalization of education, science, research and other activities of the University;**
- Quality enhancement in all areas of UEB activities;
- Development of relations with institutions and organisations active in the business community.

2.1.2 Internal quality assurance as key element in the mission statement

High quality of teaching and learning has been the core of the strategic objectives of the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück. The mission statement adopted in 2001 contains the philosophy concerning quality assurance; it reflects, to some extent, the quality culture the institution strives to implement: the programmes should be regularly adjusted in order to meet the needs of students and employers. The institution should respond to the appropriateness of teaching and learning processes on a regular basis. The staff of the institution should constantly work on upgrading the skills and reacting to the weaknesses. The system should be characterized by the ability to accept critical views and comments, and be able to learn from mistakes and challenges. The institution should be characterized by democratic procedures which allow substantial involvement, participation and ownership.

Internationalization of education and research has been a key element of the strategic objectives. The mission statement emphasizes the importance of networking with local, regional and national institutions.

Strategy and quality management are closely connected. This is true for both institutions. And it reflects the empirical observation of many studies that this link and a firm commitment of leadership towards quality assurance are the prerequisite for success and progress with respect to quality (Kaufmann 2009).

2.2 The importance of externally funded programs for quality assurance processes

2.2.1 Outputs of the European Social Fund Project *Integrated System of Quality Assurance and Improvement at UEB* aimed at creation of QAIS

An externally funded programme have stimulated the debate on the quality assurance at UEB. The following seven intended outputs and aims of the project describe how the European Social Fund Project influenced the development of the quality assurance system:

- **Output:** *Institutional Quality Manual for the Implementation of Internal System of Quality Assurance and Improvement at the University of Economics in Bratislava*
Aim: systematic and uniform approach to institutional evaluation, assurance and enhancement of quality;
- **Output:** IT support to the quality assessment process
Aim: to enable on-line assessment to relevant groups of respondents;
- **Output:** Document for self-assessment of the University in accordance with the structure of EQUIS (in Slovak & English version)
Aim: effective preparation for external accreditation as well as other evaluation & accreditation processes and UEB membership in the international associations/networks;
- **Output:** Self-assessment report in the area of international relations at university level intended for the preparation for quality certification
Aim: to enhance quality of activities carried out in the area of international relations and internationalization;
- **Output:** the *Q – KVALITA* portal as a component of the UEB website
Aim: to create a central point of information and documents regarding quality assurance at UEB;
- **Output:** Establishment of an Alumni club at UEB and its statutes
Aim: to foster feedback from UEB graduates and promote cooperation with the business community;
- **Output:** Information documents about UEB focusing on quality culture (in English)
Aim: contribution to promoting UEB abroad.

2.2.2 Outputs of externally funded programs at the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück

The current system of quality assurance at the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück is the result of a long process of change and development. Some externally

funded programs contributed to the philosophy and practice of quality assurance today:

- **Output:** Establishment of an electronic learning platform
Aim: The Ministry of Lower Saxony in Germany supported the development of an electronic learning platform which is intended to facilitate uploading and downloading services, communication between students and instructors, administration, between students. The platform offers modern and easy to use forms of evaluating courses;
- **Output:** Creation of a well-functioning credit point system
Aim: The German Academic Exchange Service funded programs introducing a credit point system and, introducing new forms of support for internationalization of study programmes, and for excellent services for foreign students;
- **Output:** New instruments in managing international programmes are applied
Aim: The Germany Academic Exchange Service funded the introduction of an internationally oriented Bachelor and Master degree taught in English and attracting both German and foreign students, and thereby introducing new methods of quality management;
- **Output:** New tools for efficient management of processes in administration and student services are applied
Aim: The Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft, the German business community's innovation agency for Higher Education awarded the institution with a grant for innovation in teaching, learning and internationalization;
- **Output:** The recruitment processes for teaching staff is effective and efficient.
Aim: Benchmarking with 6 other leading universities of applied sciences as part of the UAS7-agenda allows for institutional learning.

In summarizing these inputs and watching progress over the years, it is clear that at both institutions externally funded programmes played an important role in initiating change, demonstrating feasibility of new approaches, overcoming resistance, allowing for national and international benchmarking.

2.3 Description of internal quality assurance systems of UEB and FH Os

2.3.1 Principles for quality assurance

Development of the internal quality system and other project outputs at UEB was based on the ensuing principles:

- Principle 1: Up-to-date, comprehensive and uniform nature;
- Principle 2: Supporting the University's strategy;
- Principle 3: Follow-up to national frameworks of quality assurance and its external assessment;
- Principle 4: Follow-up to existing institutional framework of quality assurance;
- Principle 5: Openness, flexibility and orientation on continuous improvement;
- Principle 6: Strengthening feedback and making University results visible.

The internal quality assurance system of the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück, aimed at accountability and improvement, is based on similar principles:

- Evaluation should include process in teaching, research and administration;
- Effective quality management requires an atmosphere of trust and respect both between staff and leadership and teaching staff and students;
- Evaluation results need to be documented;
- Anonymity and data protection should be highly valued;
- Faculties are in charge of regular quality assurance of their programmes and processes.

There are similar principles at both institutions. A difference at least in wording might be the emphasis on a uniform approach at UEB. While this might be true as well in Osnabrück concerning the principles, there is emphasis in Osnabrück on the right and appropriateness of specific quality assurance processes in different faculties, reflecting different traditions and practices in faculties.

2.3.2 Sources of reference

International trends in quality management, national standards and internally set standards all play a role in the quality assurance system adopted.

The development of the internal quality system for UEB rests on the following sources of reference:

- Accreditation criteria of the University activities and comprehensive accreditation pursuant to the Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education as amended;
- Recommendations of the European University Association Evaluation Commission on the basis of evaluation processes at the University of Economics in Bratislava;
- ENQA standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area;
- The European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS);
- The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model;
- Projects of the European University Association "Quality Culture" and "Quality Assurance for the Higher Education Change Agenda" (QAHECA);
- Results of University projects dealing with quality issues.

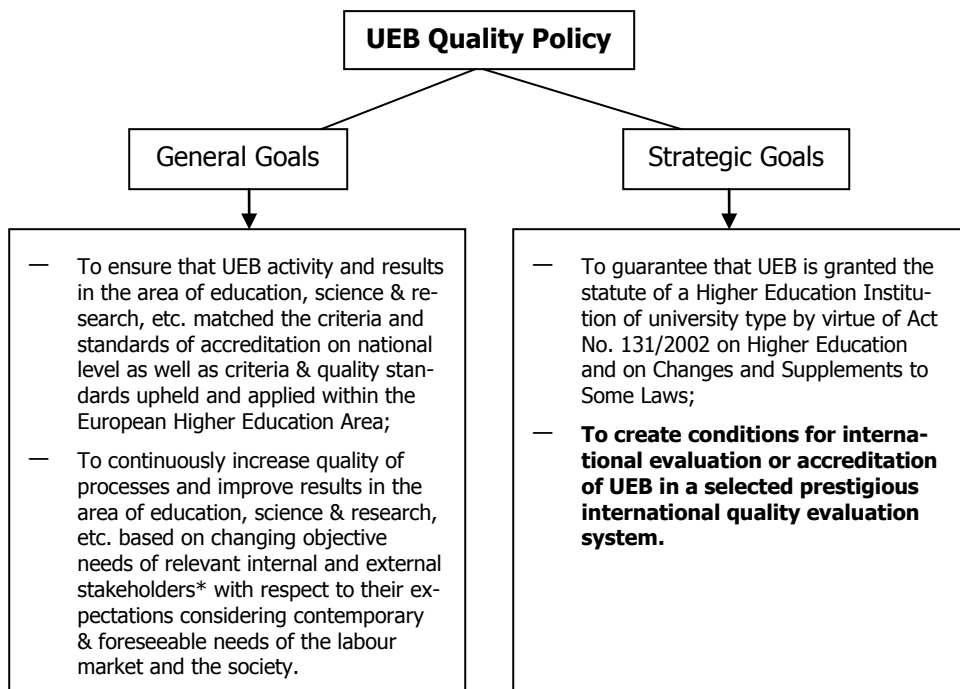
The quality assurance system in Osnabrück is based on the following sources of reference:

- International standards such as ENQA standards and guidelines for quality assurance;
- Criteria for accreditation of the study programmes and support processes such as the "common structural guidelines" of the German states, or specific guidelines for accreditation processes issued by the currently six accreditation agencies;
- The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model;
- Results of university projects dealing with quality issues.

Both institutions refer to the international and national standards and trends.

2.3.3 Quality policy

Fig. 1 General and Strategic Goals (2007-2011 with prospects by 2015) of UEB Quality Policy



* NB: students, teachers, staff, graduates, government, employers, other representatives of the business community

Source: Abridged and adapted from Information Handbook „The Quality Assurance and Improvement System at the University of Economics in Bratislava“, p. 18.

The general goals for quality management at University of Applied Sciences Os-nabrück are very much the same. While an international accreditation is not one of the strategic objectives of the Faculty of Business Management and Social Sciences in Os-nabrück, there is a general recognition that widely recognized high quality in the provision of teaching and research is important for getting access to the third cycle at least in the medium term.

2.3.4 Organisational structure and internal regulations

In compliance with the legislative framework in force regulating Higher Education in the Slovak Republic as well as in accordance with the statutes, rules of internal governance of the UEB and other internal regulations, rules and guidelines, academic bodies and academic functionaries of UEB, heads of departments, directors of institutes, other senior staff, academic and non-academic employees are responsible for a particular defined area of activity, and, implicitly, for quality assurance, too. Thus, while the institutional organisational structure of UEB is identical with the one designed for

quality assurance, it is reinforced in terms of monitoring, evaluation, assurance and quality enhancement by:

- *Vice-Rector and Vice-Deans in charge of quality;*
- *Centre for Quality Assurance and Enhancement* (regulated by the Organisation Code of the Centre for Quality Assurance and Enhancement);
- *Quality Council* (regulated by the Statutes of the Quality Council).

A detailed description of the system and complete implementation-related documentation is introduced in the *Institutional Quality Manual for the Implementation of Internal System of Quality Assurance and Improvement at the University of Economics in Bratislava* that is reviewed and updated on an annual basis following the termination of preceding assessment period (i. e. academic year).

The approach at the University of Applied Sciences in Osnabrück is similar. Lecturers are responsible for their courses, heads of departments, directors of programmes, directors of special offices such as career centres, international offices etc. are first and foremost in charge of offering high quality services in their area of responsibility. They regularly review their processes and work. It was decided, however, to have one more office, a central office for quality management being in charge of overall coordination of quality management, being staffed with two persons. In addition, each faculty established a new position for a person who is in charge of overseeing the quality assurance at the faculty level. The responsibilities are as follows:

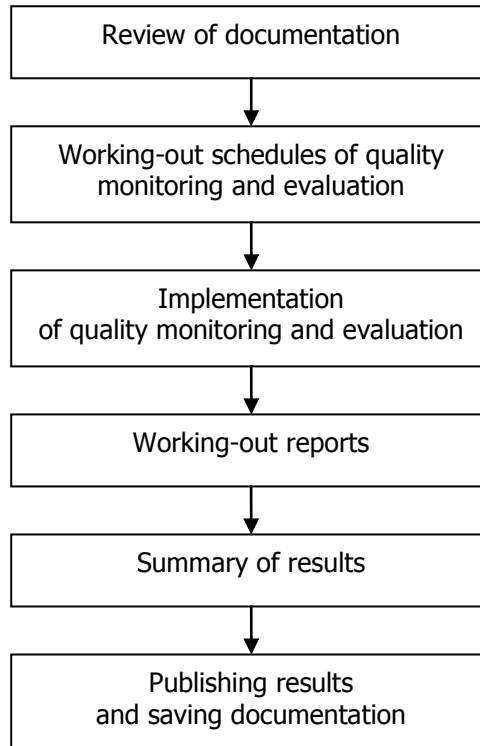
- *Vice-President and Dean of Studies in charge of quality;*
- *Centre for Quality Assurance;*
- *Quality assurance task manager at each faculty;*
- *Quality management councils at all faculties;*
- *Senate with respect to a regular review of processes and results.*

Both institutions have centralized and decentralized structures, reflecting the need to have a sound overall approach, and at the same time the commitment at the faculties and institutes.

2.3.5 Methods and tools for Processes 1 & 2

Methods for Process 1: Process of Quality Monitoring and Evaluation

Fig. 2 Process of Quality Monitoring and Evaluation at UEB



Source: After Information Handbook „The Quality Assurance and Improvement System at the University of Economics in Bratislava“, p. 33-35.

The following methods have been identified:

- Regular opinion surveys – focus: internal (students, teachers, other staff) and external (graduates, employers, other representatives of practice) respondent groups;
- Monitoring educational process – focus: observation of the syllabus, teacher’s performance in the class, teaching and learning methods;
- Evaluation of courses – focus: relevance of the course with regard to the given study programme, learning outcomes, course syllabus, teaching and learning methods, links to science & research, assessment of students, learning resources, involvement of professionals from the business community, measures aimed at quality assurance and their outcomes;
- Evaluation of study programmes – focus: relevance of the study programme with respect to the UEB mission, strategy, labour market and trends in the society, learning outcomes, curriculum, courses, links to education and science & research, delivery of the study programme, teaching and learning methods, learning resources and conditions for delivering the respective programme, feedback from

- employers & labour market representatives as well as other relevant stakeholders, measures aimed at quality assurance and their outcomes;
- Internal¹⁰ and external¹¹ institutional evaluation of the University, its faculties, departments, institutes and other university units – focus:
 - Mission, vision, strategy, organisation and management;
 - Arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement;
 - Educational activities;
 - Science, research and professional activities;
 - Teachers and other staff;
 - Students;
 - Material conditions (rooms, equipment, libraries, etc.);
 - Funding;
 - **International relations and internationalization** (*Box 2*);
 - Cooperation with social environment at the local, regional, national, international levels.

The Faculty of Business Management and Social Sciences basically uses the same tools to address the issue of quality. The basis for quality management are various working groups which address issues of quality improvement in their respective domain: working groups being responsible for study programmes (consisting of 5-7 staff members involved in such a programme) address issues pertaining to the respective programme. Other working groups address the issue of assessment or international mobility.

The central office for quality management is in charge of quality assurance processes for selected services such as library, career centres, student affairs. But their main task is to advise the whole institution on the set up of well functioning quality assurance processes, their task is focused on the quality assurance process.

Box 2 Methods and Tools for Quality Monitoring and Evaluation in the area of International relations and internationalization at UEB

A. Evaluation by non-anonymous respondents

A.1 Monitoring of teaching by means of visits to classes (*instruction in foreign languages*)

A.2 Evaluation of courses (*instruction in foreign languages*)

A.3 Evaluation of study programmes (*instruction in foreign languages*)

B. Opinion surveys by anonymous respondents

B.1 Opinion of students about a course/teacher (*instruction in foreign languages*)

B.2 Opinion of students/graduates; teachers/professionals about the study programme (*instruction in foreign languages*)

B.3 Opinion of teachers about study groups of students (*instruction in foreign languages*)

¹⁰ i. e. self-evaluation in the form of a written self-evaluation report and/or a review by a panel of internal & invited external experts in a five-year cycle

¹¹ No internal evaluation takes place provided external assessment is undertaken. Once external evaluation is initiated, it is implemented in accordance with a selected external model of quality assessment out of a range of models available on the national or international level.

- B.4 Opinion of incoming students about quality of international mobility under ERASMUS programme
- B.5 Opinion of incoming teachers and staff about quality of international mobility under ERASMUS programme
- B.6 Opinion of outgoing students about quality of international mobility under ERASMUS programme – study periods abroad
- B.7 Opinion of outgoing students about quality of international mobility under ERASMUS programme – practical placements abroad
- B.8 Opinion of outgoing students about quality of international mobility under CEEPUS, DANUBIA and other programmes
- B.9 Opinion of outgoing teachers and staff about quality of international mobility under ERASMUS programme
- B.10 Opinion of ERASMUS programme managers from partner universities about the academic level and behaviour of UEB students during their study period at partner university
- B.11 Opinion of ERASMUS programme tutors from partner businesses and institutions about the work achievement and behaviour of UEB students during their practical placement abroad
- B.12 Opinion of teachers and staff about the quality of organisation of business trips abroad by the International Relations Office

Source: Adapted from Information Handbook „The Quality Assurance and Improvement System at the University of Economics in Bratislava“, p. 31.

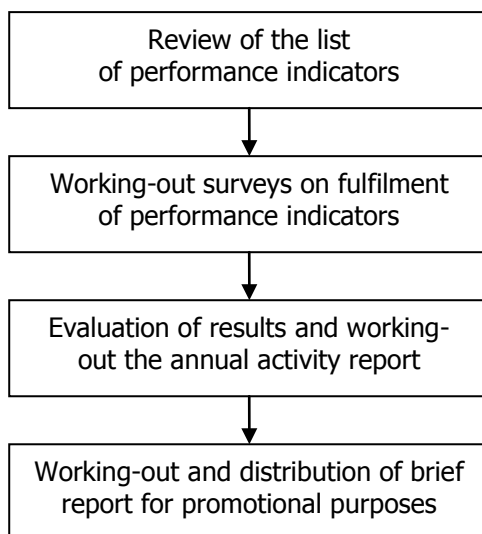
On the basis of previous evaluation processes and collection of the relevant data reflecting performance within the period under consideration in all related areas of activity in qualitative and quantitative terms, strengths and weaknesses are identified and a plan for improvement is outlined albeit “due to the complex character of this kind of evaluation, neither the internal, nor external evaluation of the University, Faculties, Departments, Institutes, and other University units is included in the process of regular quality monitoring and evaluation”¹².

A number of working groups deal with specific issues pertaining to internationalization: A standing committee of the faculty deals with the international affairs such as selection of international partners, requirements for international mobility, development of learning agreements etc. Working groups for international programmes continuously deal with the issues concerning international mobility as part of their programmes, integration of foreign lecturers in the programmes, language requirements, double degree programmes etc. It has not been common yet to systematically, i.e. once every semester or year, use questionnaires for foreign students to evaluate their specific experience or for German students who spend a semester abroad.

¹² Information Handbook „The Quality Assurance and Improvement System at the University of Economics in Bratislava“, p. 31.

Methods for Process 2: Process of Monitoring and Evaluating Performance Indicators

Fig. 3 Process of Monitoring and Evaluating Performance Indicators at UEB



Source: After Information Handbook „The Quality Assurance and Improvement System at the University of Economics in Bratislava“, p. 36.

This process was outlined to ensure that identical approach towards collection and processing of the relevant data is applied; the *Institutional Quality Manual for the Implementation of Internal System of Quality Assurance and Improvement at the University of Economics in Bratislava* lists performance indicators¹³ for different areas of activity taking into account the requirements of the following:

- Comprehensive Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions pursuant to the Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education as amended;
- ENQA standards and guidelines;
- EQUIS;
- Ranking criteria applied by the Slovak ARRA agency.

2.3.6 Additional measures for quality improvement

There are many further measures aimed at the quality enhancement. The UEB Code of Ethics, the Magna Charta Universitatum or the Statutes of EC Accreditation Committee. There are other measures implied by the organizational structure. The institutions of particular importance are the Institute of Economics and Management, the Alumni Club, the Career Center, the Centre for Implementation of Learning Organisation and the International Programmes Institute. The IT system for disclosing plagiarism might be of particular relevance. The UEB membership in the UN Global Compact reflects a new approach with high international visibility.

¹³ subject to annual modification depending on criteria applied in assessment models for Higher Education Institutions

The reality of quality assurance is similarly multi-faceted at the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück. Institutions like Career Center, the alumni

Organization Wiconnect, the IT management unit and others have their own ways of reviewing the processes and results.

2.3.7 Benefits of the quality system

Benefits of the quality system at UBE have been identified as¹⁴:

- To identify strong and weak points effectively;
- To foster feedback between and among relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- To compare the results of quality assessment and performance indicators between and among faculties and other units of UEB;
- To compare the results of quality assessment and performance indicators over the time;
- To identify and analyse the trends in evaluation and perception of quality as well as in performance;
- To adopt appropriate measures.

The same applies to the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück. Such benefits are increasingly recognized by all stakeholders involved. An additional and most important benefit of the existence of a strong and convincing quality assurance system will be its consequence for accreditation. Costs for accreditation, in terms of money and most importantly time of academic staff for preparing for external quality assurance processes will be enormously reduced when a well functioning quality assurance system exists.

Conclusions and recommendations

The paper shows the complexity of quality management at Higher Education Institutions. The challenge for quality management is not the introduction of a single instrument, but rather the development of coherent systems, which link together different tools and instruments. Both institutions have found the ways to use international experience for developing their systems of quality assurance. It is recommended to use even more systematically international experience, to benchmark with international partners. Both institutions have realized that quality assurance needs a commitment of the staff of the institution. And this commitment can only be a result of the broadly shared quality culture. This culture is partly the result of an overall discourse on quality in public management and Higher Education. But the management of the process of quality management inside the Higher Education Institution is most important.

¹⁴ Information Handbook „The Quality Assurance and Improvement System at the University of Economics in Bratislava“, p. 43.

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