

Chapter 3

Assessment and management in institutions of higher education

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Introduction

A few decades ago, it was not taken for granted that university staff should be formally and regularly assessed, except when they were candidates for promotion. Most universities saw this as a task that had to be done by peers, with other stakeholders seldom being included in this process. Senior colleagues assessed whether a young colleague was fit to move up in the academic ranks. His or her teaching and research behaviour was certainly discussed, but very seldom, if ever (depending on the country or university), was there any formal assessment by other stakeholders. This has now changed completely. There are probably very few HEIs (higher education institutions) today where there is no formal assessment of teaching and research procedures of the staff by peers and/or students, although this practice is not always accepted and is certainly regularly criticized. In this chapter, I am interested in answers to questions concerning the social circumstances in which these assessment procedures have been created, the kinds of instrument used, the advantages and disadvantages of the assessment procedures, their introduction by university managers and the resistance they encounter.

The social context of the assessment of teaching and research

The reasons for the emergence of the assessment procedures of teaching and research are many. I will consider here only a few of them: mass higher education, globalization, internationalization and neo-liberalism.

Mass education and the growing awareness of stakeholders

The second part of the last century in Europe was characterized by increasing democratic access to secondary and higher education. The position of universities changed with their insertion either into a unified higher education system or into a binary system by the upgrading of forms of secondary education into professionally oriented education or by the establishment of higher professionally oriented education. This diminished the elite status of the universities, but it opened HEIs to a larger portion of secondary school graduates than had ever been. In most European countries, access to higher education is beyond 15% of the age grade [1]. This process was certainly an important advance for democracy, but it also had a tremendous influence on the HEIs and on the related policies. To mention only a few of the consequences: rising costs (it is often claimed that higher education is underfunded), growing numbers of students in lecture halls, declining teacher/student ratios, increased distance between the student and the teacher, problems of HEI governance, commercialization of research and teaching, and declining teacher morale [1]. At the same time, HEIs could no longer live without heeding the expectations of the growing number of stakeholders, internal (academic and non-academic staff, and students) as well as external (parents, taxpayers, employers, the state and international organizations) [2]. Most stakeholders no longer took for granted that HEIs by definition offered quality education. More than one of them wanted a quality assurance system that fit this mass higher education and wanted HEIs to be accountable for what they did.

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Globalization

While mass higher education was developing in Europe, the effects of globalization became increasingly apparent. Admittedly, globalization is a difficult concept [3–7], but McBurnie [5] differentiates four strands of interest to my present purposes. The first strand is the economic one: “visible in the global flow of trade and investment, the availability of particular goods worldwide, and the multinational location of manufacturing and marketing” [5]. Seen to be marketable are not goods, but also services and especially education. The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) could be an important factor in this respect. Another dimension of globalization is the political one. This is “characterized by the growth of supranational organizations addressing policy and regulatory matters beyond the scope of individual nations” [5]. Important actors in Europe are the EU (European Union), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), and other international organizations, such as professional organizations. Although the Bologna Process was not organized by such a supranational organization, the decisions taken within this framework have far-reaching consequences for the HEIs [8,9]. Thirdly, there is the cultural dimension: “the flow of cultural images and information about cultural practices around the world”, also called ‘McDonaldization’ [5]. Although these mostly Western values are not equally accepted everywhere, they still strongly influence local values. The last dimension of globalization discerned by McBurnie [5] is the technological one, which is, at present, being strongly supported by the integration of information and communications technology. This is, and could be even more so in the future, a very important contributor to the spread of higher education among groups that have not yet been able to enjoy higher education. At the same time, it is creating new challenges for HEIs because the distribution of knowledge is no longer their privilege, but has to be shared with all kinds of providers, who do it for free or for money (private profit-oriented universities and corporate universities).

The influence of globalization on higher

education policy is taking on different forms. Besides the influence of other nation states, Dale [10] discerns five forms of influence coming from the globalization process: harmonization (EU), dissemination (OECD), standardization (of curricula), installing interdependence (because people are concerned about peace and the environment), and imposition (by an organization in exchange for support).

Internationalization

Already before globalization became an issue, internationalization was a natural part of higher education. Relative to the situation a few decades ago, the internationalization of higher education is now proceeding more rapidly and is taking on different forms. ‘Internationalization of higher education’ can mean many things and has been the subject of much discussion. Hilary Callan [11] refers to the typology devised by Jane Knight, who distinguishes four types, the first being the ‘activity approach’, which refers to phenomena such as student and faculty mobility, international student recruitment, technical assistance, knowledge transfer and research co-operation. The second type concerns the outcomes and goals of students and lecturers as a product of international contacts. This is called the ‘competency’ approach. The third is a ‘cultural’ one, which occurs when the presence of academics of different nationalities on a campus influences the local culture and organization. The last is the ‘process’ or ‘strategic’ approach and refers to parts of the first three types when they are integrated in a plan to give an international dimension to an HEI or to the higher education policy of a country.

The first three types have been present in higher education as long as higher education has existed. Some HEIs have always attracted scholars from different regions or nations. The number of international students (students studying in a country other than their own) is expected to increase greatly, and Böhm et al. [12] estimated that, throughout the world, about 1.8 million international students were studying in HEIs in 2000 (mainly in the U.S.A.). They estimate that this figure will be 7.2 million (70% of them coming from Asia) by 2025. Internationalization is currently a process that is included in the plans of most nations and HEIs.

Scientific knowledge does not stop at the borders of a nation state, and HEIs are not interested in knowledge that is confined to the work of the local researcher. Quite the opposite. International recognition of the research of local HEIs is seen as the main criterion for assessing the results of research. Without international recognition, an HEI has no future in a globalized world. In this context, the contribution of the ERASMUS (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) and Leonardo da Vinci schemes is important.²

Neo-liberalism

As higher education in Europe was beginning to feel the influence of globalization and internationalization, neo-liberalism became prominent. Although neo-liberalism has its roots in the old liberal thinking, Olssen (reviewed in [13]) contends that it has its own characteristics. Neo-liberalism takes for granted that the state has to create 'an appropriate market' by providing the conditions, laws and institutions needed for the proper functioning of the market. This includes making the individual an entrepreneur who is ready to compete with the others on the market, but he is no longer seen merely as a *Homo economicus* concerned only with self-interest and being averse to the state. The citizen in a neo-liberal society has to become a 'manipulatable man' who is responsive to what the state expects. Everybody is supposed to be accountable for what he or she does. A neo-liberal state wants responsible citizens and so creates instruments for surveillance and appraisal.

It is not surprising that processes of deregulation and privatization are the key policy instruments in the neo-liberal state. Anything that makes goods and services unapproachable for others because of restrictive rules has to be abolished. This can have far-reaching consequences for the development of

higher education. In its extreme form, it could mean for Europe, where higher education is seen as a public good,³ that higher education has to be privatized. Although the EU is applying this principle of liberalization of education, Commissioner Viviane Reding of the European Commission stressed that commitments of the EU countries in the GATS refer only to privately funded education services [15]. Not only is higher education in Europe not privatized, but also, in many respects, it is not deregulated. For instance, many European countries still have control over first-level degree fees, and they also demand a quality assurance system in HEIs [14].

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that higher education cannot be disassociated from the market thinking that is currently prevailing in Europe. Official governmental declarations notwithstanding, higher education is being treated as a product to be marketed, and a rating system for HEIs is seen as a helpful supporting instrument for this. Higher education is something that can be sold, even in a society where most of the cost of higher education is covered by the government.⁴ Tooley (reviewed in [16]) distinguishes two concepts of the market in relation to higher education: 'education of the market', which is gaining space in higher education, and 'markets for education'. Education is becoming a commodity that can be commercialized and sold on a market where the demand in our knowledge society is growing. HEIs have seen this as an opportunity for expanding their ability to improve the education they provide. The sale of education to professionals may not be seen as the primary task of a college of higher education, which is providing academic education for beginning students. By delivering training to professionals, the college enters the market for education, which Tooley (reviewed in [16]) has defined as "educational opportunities delivered by markets, i.e. not provided, largely funded or largely regulated by

²About 1.2 million students from 2199 HEIs in 31 countries participated in the ERASMUS programme between 1987 and 2004. In 2003–2004, 135 586 students were mobile within this framework (http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/erasmus/stat_en.html).

³Dill et al. [14] reject the opinion that higher education is a pure public good. "Pure' public goods need to be both publicly financed and publicly supplied, by which is meant the state owns the capital inputs and employs the necessary labour". This is certainly not the case in all European HEIs.

⁴Low-cost or free tuition for studying in higher education is often seen as inefficient and unfair [1,14] because only better-off students will take the most advantage of it. This opinion is not generally accepted.

government, with supply-side liberated and the price mechanism in place⁵. Even in the higher education systems of the EU, where the main part of the budget is provided by the state, HEIs are acting more and more as suppliers to the education market. This is done not only on the market of postgraduate higher education, but also at the undergraduate level. Students are approached as individuals whose right of free choice and self-interest on the education market have to be protected. Gibbs [16] stresses that, on the HEI market, the rights of the individuals are protected by the government. Students are primarily consumers, and consumers of education must obtain an education that is 'consumable'. This means that education should be organized according to the capacities of these consumers, which is expressed in forms of modularization, semesterization and self-directed learning. Education here, Gibbs [16] contends, is outcome-driven and is directed to make accredited people "able to use their educational outcomes (or competencies) to further their economic desires". This may place a burden not only on the relationship between the teacher and the student, but also on the relationship between the HEI and the teacher, who has to be prepared to carry higher academic loads in order to increase the profit of the HEI. Young people may become less interested in academic excellence than in employability. Consequently, HEIs may be more interested in offering curricula that fit the demand for vocational training and skills. Professional profiles that are successful on the labour market may guide the construction of curricula more than does the problem of how to make a young person an educated and moral person.

Management and quality assurance

As noted, globalization stimulates nation states to copy from each other policy principles, culture, the organization of economy and education, etc. Moreover, the supranational organizations contribute to harmonization, dissemination, standardization, etc. This is also visible in HEIs in Europe as far as institutional governance and management are concerned.

Nevertheless, the question is are all HEIs and states moving in the same direction?

On the basis of a comparative study in several member states, the OECD [17] concluded that "higher education is moving towards a new system of governance, where the power of markets and the power of the state combine in new ways. Government is generally withdrawing from direct management of institutions, yet at the same time introducing new forms of control and influence, based largely on holding institutions accountable for performance via powerful enforcement mechanisms including funding and quality recognition". Similar observations have been made by Amaral et al. [18]. State governments still have their say in HEIs, but, instead of direct control, they prefer to steer at a distance. Although most universities in the 11 countries of the OECD study are state universities, they are very autonomous as far as the spending of the budgets is concerned in order to achieve their objectives, and they are also very autonomous as regards the hiring and firing of academic staff. There is also much independence of HEIs in these countries in the setting of academic structures and course content. For all the domains of governance, however, there are many differences between the countries.

Not only have the states changed their policy, but also institutional governance has changed. Without doubt, many HEIs are visibly developing from collegially managed institutions to institutions in which the institutional management is being granted to experts who did not formerly belong to the academic staff or to academics who change from being teachers and/or researchers to managers. The belief that HEIs could only be managed by experts of the scientific disciplines is no longer shared by policy-makers and HEI managers. Moreover, it is often held by policy-makers that collegial decision-making structures for HEIs are not efficient enough to make the rapid decisions needed in a time of rapid change and increasing challenges for HEIs. Indeed, HEIs have lost their monopoly on teaching and research (e.g. corporate universities). If they want

⁵When a market is defined as 'the free exchange of comparable goods and services based upon price' [14], it is clear that higher education is not a perfect market. Existing monopolies and imperfect information, among other things, make this improbable.

to survive, they have to adapt to the new situation. At the same time, an adage of industry is being applied to HEIs, namely that it is not possible for insiders to see the problems of the institution. Only governors and managers coming from outside the HEIs are able to see the problems and make the hard decisions necessary for survival (see, e.g., [1]). Of the 15 countries covered by the OECD report [17], in nine of them, the board is composed of mainly external members, and the leaders of the HEIs are appointed by the board. Only in six of the 15 countries are the leaders of the HEIs elected from the staff. In some of the countries, the leaders are recruited internally, in others, recruitment is external.

Not only has institutional governance changed, but also the management style has changed. Very often the concept applied here is 'managerialism'. The least that can be said of this concept is that it pinpoints to a phenomenon that is not always understood in the same way by its users. Amaral et al. [18] devoted a book to this phenomenon, with chapters describing the situation in different countries, and concluded that it is important to distinguish between managerialism as "an ideology for strategic change of public services" and "the quite commonly accepted need to provide institutions with more flexible and effective administration, on the understanding that any new management tools and processes remain instruments at the service of the institution and its academic leadership". This distinction also explains why institutional governance did not change in some universities, whereas, at the same time, principles or organizational modes were introduced to obtain more efficient management than could be provided by collegial management, which invests much time in meetings. However, it is clear that quality assurance is being organized according to widely accepted principles, even in collegially managed HEIs.

What are the characteristics of managerialism? It is not easy to find a definition of this phenomenon that is shared by all researchers. Reed [19] speaks of a governmental and institutional order 'which has existed under the traditional compromise

between corporate bureaucracy and professional association'. Amaral et al. [18] did not stipulate in advance what the different contributors to the book had to understand under managerialism, but they did state that most of the contributors came to accept some common characteristics, although they did not agree on all. To name some of them: accountability based on performance, target setting, funding based on results, collegial leadership and decision-making replaced by individual leadership and decision-making, marketization, commercialization, bureaucratization, appointment of leaders, more external members in the central governing body, a loss of professional autonomy of academics, and deprofessionalization of the academics. At the same time, however, they recognized characteristics linked to the old collegial type of governance. Some examples are democratic decision-making, the promotion of consensus within the community, consultation and persuasion of members of councils, and recognition of the university as a professional organization. In other words, HEIs may adopt managerialist principles, but still maintain some principles of the old collegial structure. Amaral et al. [18] conclude: "whatever progress the onward march of managerialism may be making within specific systems, and granting that there are important similarities between some of these, taken as a whole, these different case studies present a picture of our continuing diversity at the national level. It cannot (at least yet) be convincingly argued that there is a multinational convergence towards new methods and processes of management, paved by the brutal expansion of the new managerialist ideology".

All of the contributors to this project mention the resistance of the academics against these innovations. The academics accused the new system of having reduced their freedom in teaching and research and of creating corporate professionals who lose their independence and have to work for a company instead of the university.⁶ Academics sometimes blamed the administrators for spending money that could be more valuably used for research.

⁶Dill et al. [14] doubt that this is an unavoidable development. They mention that "the most respected U.S. public and private research universities" sustain "their core academic functions and values", while being "subject to market forces for a longer period of time than those in other mature economies".

Administrators, for their part, got worked up by the inability of academics to perceive the necessity of having a structured policy for the total institution. Both parties often underwent a difficult process in the search for new principles for the management of HEIs. This was caused not only by the administrators coming from outside the institutions, but also by academics who had turned into administrators, but could not forget to apply the old collegial values. This new system will also change the hierarchy of loyalty of the academics. Traditionally, it was said that academics were in the first place loyal to the discipline, then to the department and then to the university. Because of the new positions in a managerially organized university, it is likely that academics have to be first loyal to the HEI, the institution that pays the salary [18].

Although none of these studies stressed that a managerial structure is widespread, it has become clear that many characteristics of managerialism have been incorporated into HEIs. One of these characteristics is accountability of the HEIs and the members of these HEIs. This fits perfectly in a society where neo-liberalism has become the mainstream political and economic philosophy. Citizens should be accountable for what they do, and this also applies to institutions that are supported by the state. The neo-liberal states have given more independence to educational institutions to attain their targets, but they have to be responsible not only to the state, but also to other stakeholders for the way they use the resources that the state provides.⁷ And there is more. Even when it is hard to say what the core of managerialism actually is, it is clear in many countries that accountability is one of the management principles, whether it is in a country or in an HEI where the leaders of the HEIs are elected by peers from among peers or where the leaders are appointed by boards mainly consisting of external members.

What is the meaning of accountability? Although the concept is in the current vocabulary of policy-makers, one is not sure whether this concept has the same meaning for all of the participants in the conversation. Ranson [21] gives the following general

definition: "to be accountable, conventionally, is to be held to account, defining a relationship of formal control between parties, one of whom is mandatorily held to account to the other for the exercise of roles and stewardship of public resources. Such a report, moreover, is always an evaluation of performance according to established standards". We give a short overview of the categorizations by Vidovich and Slee [4] and Ranson [21].

Vidovich and Slee [4] actually rely on two typifications, one by Corbett [22] and the other by Ball et al. [23]. Corbett [22] distinguishes four reforms of accountability: *upward accountability* is the accountability of public servants in function of legal and constitutional prescriptions to their superiors and also to the courts and administrative tribunals; *outward accountability* is the accountability to the client groups and other stakeholders in the community; *downward accountability* is the accountability of a manager to his subordinates; and *inward accountability* is the accountability of an actor toward his personal conscience. Ball et al. [23] mention market and political accountability. When actors justify what they do to consumers, we can speak of *market accountability* (and *managerial accountability*). *Politically accountable* is the person who acts on behalf of the electorate and has to answer for what he has done.

Ranson [21], referring to the British educational system, distinguishes between professional accountability (late 1970s) and four other forms of accountability linked with the neo-liberal era (commencing in the early 1980s for the U.K.; it came later on the continent). *Professional accountability* is the accountability of the professional and is based on specialist knowledge and reported in internal reports. For the age of neo-liberalism, Ranson [21] cites four forms of accountability: *consumer accountability*, whereby the responsible actors have to take into account market competition and to pay attention to the choice of the consumers; *contract accountability*, whereby schools have to be accountable for costs and efficiency, and assessments are ruled by criteria of technical efficiency and costs; *performative account-*

⁷This is made clear in the different papers on the position of stakeholders in higher education in a special issue of the *European Journal of Education*, edited by Maassen [20].

ability, whereby schools are accountable for the attainment of the national standards and targets, with test scores and league tables being used to assess it (see also Tight [24]); and *corporate accountability*, whereby schools are accountable to a private person or corporation (e.g., public–private partnerships) and rely on criteria of profitability in order to assess policy success.

Vidovich and Slee [4], describing the higher education policy in Australia and England, come close to Ranson's [21] characterization. They speak of a 'managed market', which means that they recognize managerial accountability (upwards-oriented) as well as market accountability (outwards-oriented). They stress that the managerial forms of accountability are stronger in both countries than the market forms. Governments are more interested "in providing information to students as paying customers, to inform their market choices". This 'managed market' form is easier to link to teaching than to research. There is no doubt that students and employers belong to the customers of teaching, while it is not always clear who the customers of research are. Although it is very important for researchers to find money on a competitive market, they are still more strongly oriented towards their peers than to customers. In systems where the resources depend on the level of performance of the HEIs, it is important for the institution to meet the governmental standards. When governmental resources are scarce, HEIs will look for resources in the private sector, which brings them into more of a market position. They will try to demonstrate that they do what they are expected to do by showing how good their position is in a ranking system for education and research. This system is perceived differently by elite universities, which are less dependent on government resources. For them, market accountability will be more important than governmental accountability.

This diagnosis of the accountability of the educational system by Vidovich and Slee [4] is certainly not directly transferable to other European countries, as has been shown above. Nevertheless, most of European countries have accepted that HEIs have to be accountable, at least to the national

government, which provides the majority of the resources for most of the HEIs in most European countries. However, in most of them, accountability is not only upward, but can also be downward, inward and/or outward. Whatever the position of a country in this respect, most European countries expect HEIs to establish a quality assurance system, and staff assessment is a very widespread method within this system, although a survey in France has shown that only 22.9% of the respondents had undergone 'formalized teaching evaluation' in their faculty [25].

Staff assessment instruments

Staff assessment instruments are probably not used in isolation from a global quality assurance system in HEIs. A reader edited by Orsingher [26] presents the quality assurance systems of six universities. Staff assessment in this book is integrated in a global quality assurance system. What is shown in this book is accepted as basic by most quality assessment experts. In some schools, they have undergone very sophisticated development. Among the many examples, I refer here to only one. Welsh et al. [27] describe a quality measurement system developed by and in an American university together with a private company.⁸ They wanted to create a system that continuously measures all the quality indicators of the university with valid and reliable instruments. This instrument concerned the opinions not only of the teachers and the other staff but also of the students, alumni and the employers. Surveys are conducted continuously among students, alumni of different years, employers of graduates, library users, IT (information technology) users, parents, donors and many other groups. All of the data are collected on a monthly and/or a semester basis and are uploaded to a central server. The data collection, management and analysis are all automated. Within 7–10 days, the results of the surveys are available for the interested members of the university. All members are allowed access to parts of the data, depending on their position, since, for example, the head of a department has different interests to a faculty member. Therefore

⁸For a similar example, see [28].

each of them has permission to check different parts of the database. If someone has to report on a particular quality issue, he has up-to-date information available in the database.

According to the authors, the advantages of this quality assurance 'machine' are many, one being the common platform for the whole university concerning assessment, and another being the philosophy supporting the assessment, so no discussion is needed when an evaluation has to be delivered. It also offers the advantage of presenting the results of previous actions taken. It is seen as an instrument for decentralizing actions in a function of evaluation and/or accreditation. Departments can produce self-evaluation reports and instruments to benchmark programme performance. With this instrument, the university is able to integrate the quality assurance system and report to the state. The instrument is not only efficient for quality assurance, but also cheaper than a less-organized system.

Such a quality assurance machine seems to be the perfect answer to the problem of quality assurance for a managerial system. It is hard to resist the impression that we have here a perfect machine for detecting problems, seeing the roads to solutions and, ultimately, enabling stakeholders to measure improvement. Is this actually the case? Such an assessment would require more information than is given in the report by Welsh et al. [27]. Nevertheless, research has been carried out on the strengths and the weaknesses of the current instruments for staff assessment. I will confine my description of these characteristics to the students' rating instruments for the assessment of the teaching of faculty [SET (students' evaluation of teachers)].

Based on the information from some 20 research papers (published since 2000), I have come to the conclusion that there is a wide acceptance of the reliability and the validity of the instruments to measure SET ([29–38], for example). Moreover, this is supported by the numerous references affirming such a judgement in each paper. This information certainly contributes very much to the trust of managers in these instruments. The question is whether this trust is general among all stakeholders. Not at all. Many reasons have been put forward by observers of this phenomenon. Basic questions are

what the evaluation of teachers by students means and why the evaluations are made.

SET is often seen as a rating activity by students of the overt teaching actions and the assessment by students of the perceived consequences of the teaching on their learning behaviour [36]. Others use the concept of teaching effectiveness [37]. Although the concepts are closely related, researchers do not agree about the dimensions that should be studied when we try to collect a picture of teacher effectiveness. Some mention two dimensions (e.g. clear instructional presentation and management of student behaviour), others give more (e.g. caring, systematic and stimulating, or respect for students, organization and presentation skills and ability to challenge students). Obviously, researchers and stakeholders can use the same concept, but it is not certain that the concept covers the same phenomenon.

On the basis of papers published in *The American Psychologist* in 1997, Saroyan and Amundsen [36] conclude that there is little discussion about the level of construct validity of the rating instruments of teacher effectiveness. The instruments seem to enable students to provide an accurate measurement of effectiveness. The results seem to support a moderate correlation with effective teaching and with student achievement. Nevertheless, it is observed that they are more suspicious about the discriminatory validity of the ratings, i.e. indicators were found that did not support effective teaching, but rather correlated with the ratings.

Although some authors consider this to be a minor problem, a growing number of researchers are criticizing the lack of attention given to this problem. The reason for this may be linked with the criticism of lecturers of the validity of the instruments for measuring teaching effectiveness and the consequences of validity for the learning behaviour of students. Some of these remarks have been confirmed by research, but they have also been refuted. This has not stopped the use of SET, but it has contributed to discussions among stakeholders about the utility and the legitimacy of the use of SET for assessing lecturers [39]. What are the most important conclusions?

First, data in more than one survey gives evidence that there is a strong relationship between

grading leniency and ratings of teaching effectiveness [33,36,37,40]. Strong evidence is also found in web-based voluntary student evaluations in the U.S.A. Felton et al. [41] found a correlation of 0.61 between the teaching quality of the lecturers and level of difficulty. Since teaching effectiveness has certainly nothing to do with lowering the standards, such a situation can hardly support the use of SET.

Secondly, class size may also influence the results of SET [36,37]. While the results are not so outspoken, the data show that the largest and the smallest classes give the highest ratings.

Thirdly, instructor enthusiasm can be another factor that reduces the real significance of SET [36]. If the instructor is enthusiastic, it does not mean necessarily that he or she contributes much to the learning behaviour of students.

Fourthly, research has also found that students who have “a positive and/or social view of the lecturer” will rate a lecturer higher, even though it is not certain that this lecturer contributes more to a better understanding of the study material [33,37,41]. Shevlin et al. [37] took this statement as a starting point for their research. They concluded that the charisma factor can explain 69% of the variation in the lecturer's ability rating. In other words, a significant proportion of the SET's scale variation is a reflection of the charisma of the lecturer and/or of the expectations of the students towards the lecturer [40]. This positive attitude might also come from a judgement by the students about the 'sexy appearance' of the lecturer. Felton et al. [41] concluded on the basis of data collected in a voluntary web-based assessment of teaching effectiveness in the U.S.A. that the results were determined by how sexy the instructor was, but this was countered by a study of students of a Spanish university [42].

Fifthly, when students have high expectations about their grades, they are prone to rate the lecturers higher, which is confirmed in the research by Worthington [40], but not by Greimel-Fuhrmann and Geyer [33]. As for other variables, grading does not seem to have a consistent influence on SET.

Sixthly, the ethnic background of the students could have an important influence on the assessment of lecturers. Worthington [40] found evidence in other surveys that the ethnic background of

students did not show a 'systematic racial bias' in the assessment of lecturers.

Seventhly, gender is one of the significant divides in our society, and so researchers reasonably hypothesized that SET results could be different for male and female students and also different for male and female lecturers. Greimel-Fuhrmann and Geyer [33] discerned a significantly more favourable rating for female lecturers, while Worthington [40] states that female students assign a lower rating to their lecturers, but he admitted that he could not check whether these lower ratings were more determined by the teaching style of the lecturer than by the gender of the student.

Eighthly, age is another variable that shows important divides in our society. Worthington [40] decided that students older than 30 were more inclined to give lower ratings to lecturers. This statement is not very convincing in view of the smallness of the sample in this study and the probability of a negative assessment by students older than 30. In any event, they do not constitute a major group of students.

The rating of teachers also depends on the subject taught by the lecturer. If a lecturer is teaching a course that is linked directly with the subject the student is interested in, the rating is more positive than if this is not the case. Greimel-Fuhrmann and Geyer [33] make this statement on the basis of students in accounting.

Looking at these research results, it is understandable that Felton et al. [41] came to the conclusions that the instruments used by students to rate teaching effectiveness do not rate teaching effectiveness, but measure only a perception of teaching effectiveness. If this is true, it supports the lecturers who are reluctant to accept the application of SET either for assessment or for providing a basis to improve their teaching.

The critique of the researchers delivers more support for the opponents of SET than for the defenders. Criticism has also been delivered concerning the organization of the SET (does the lecturer's concept of teaching correspond with that of the students?) and the poverty of the instruments being used to measure teaching effectiveness [28]. Therefore some researchers propose paying more

attention to a new concept of teaching. Saroyan and Amundsen [36], for example, develop a complex teaching concept, although this cannot be measured by means of the usual simple SETs. They propose including in the teaching concept a knowledge and an action component, and also the instructional context. In the knowledge component, attention should be given to knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of the pedagogy and knowledge of the learners. The action component includes the preparation of the teaching task and the teaching itself.

Not only do the instruments not fit a more up-to-date concept of teaching, it has been complained, but also there are parts of teaching that influence its effectiveness that are hardly perceptible to the students and consequently hardly assessed by them. Ballantyne et al. [29] mention that students do not have enough information on, for instance, “problems caused by class sizes, a lack of staff collaboration, inadequate university support and the lack of staff development opportunities”. Therefore some observers plead for other approaches to assess teaching effectiveness, such as peer evaluations in class and teaching portfolios in addition to SET [43], and analysis of the thought processes underlying teaching actions, self-evaluation, student journals, free writing, teacher observation and inventories [36].

How do stakeholders react to the instruments and how do university managers try to introduce these instruments?

Important in this discussion is not only the opinion of researchers, but also the opinion of the stakeholders. I will look at some of the reactions of lecturers, students and HEI policy-makers.

Resistance is also felt among lecturers depending on the alleged function of the SET. Nasser and Fresko [34] discern four functions of SET: (i) offering feedback to the lecturers in order to improve teaching; (ii) assigning the capacities of the staff for promotion; (iii) helping students to select a course; and (iv) providing information for educational research. Although these four functions

are theoretically reasonable, they are all certainly not served in some (many?) HEIs. For instance, if the results of the SET are not made public, and this is not unusual,⁹ it will be hard for them to be used to help students choose their subjects. Moreover, summative evaluation by SET is often criticized by lecturers because research activity has much more influence on promotion than does teaching [32,35,43].

This critical attitude of lecturers may be supported by the criticism by the students. Greimel-Fuhrmann and Geyer [33] observed that one-third of the students of their sample had doubts about the usefulness of SET for the assessment of lecturers. They question the fairness of the measurements because they think that students with low grades or who do not like a teacher will express these feelings in the scores. The figures confirmed this opinion, albeit very weakly. However, they also saw that two-thirds of the students thought that they could inform the teachers about their teaching in order to improve the quality of teaching. Nevertheless, other research is less optimistic about the contribution of students and shows that not all students are interested in filling in SET questionnaires. Smith et al. [44] experienced that the response rate was highest when the survey was administered during lecture time (70–75%) and was much lower if special classes for the survey were organized (46%) or if the students were asked to send in the questionnaire later (26%). The reason for this non-participation is, among other reasons, that they are oversurveyed or do not believe that their opinion will contribute to the improvement of teaching [45]. This is not totally wrong. Nasser and Fresko [34] reported that only a small portion of the lecturers admitted having been stimulated to change something in their teaching under the influence of SET and then it very often concerned only minor interventions.

There is some uncertainty among researchers about the positive contribution of SET to the improvement of teaching. Kember et al. [35], for instance, mention different reasons for the weak influence of the SET in the university of their research, but could not decide which one was the most influential. They mention the following possible reasons: teaching quality has attained an acceptable

⁹Nasser and Fresko [34] report that 52% of the lecturers were totally opposed, and 31% agreed, but only conditionally ($n=101$).

level; SET was not used effectively; lack of incentives to use the results of SET; the instrument was more directed towards appraisal than towards teaching improvement; and SET was too teacher-centred. If improvement was observed in connection with SET, these researchers found that the collection of data with the help of a SET questionnaire went together with specialized counselling, an approach that has been confirmed by other researchers [34,36,46].

There is not just criticism of the instrument for measuring teaching effectiveness. Other resistance is reported by more than one researcher. Interesting in this respect are the observations made by Laughton [47] in relation to the teaching quality review in the U.K. It should be stressed that these are opinions that are not necessarily confirmed by facts. First, some lecturers wonder whether the money spent on testing the quality is in proportion to the effects of the test. Secondly, others report that testing the quality of education contributed to grade inflation. Thirdly, assessment of teaching revealed again the different position of the old universities in the ranking and the more recent established ones (see also [24]). Fourthly, assessment might contribute to compounding the dropout rates. Fifthly, mistakes are possible during the collection of the data, i.e. the system is not reliable enough. Sixthly, because some academics do not trust the instrument to be reliable and valid, they might react with non-compliance, lip service and sabotage of the system. Laughton [47] describes these reactions as a part of the struggle of academics for power among themselves, with the management of the university, and with the government. The system is inspired much more by a desire for accountability than for teaching improvement. Teachers felt that they lost part of their autonomy and were convinced that these are some of the first steps taken by managers led by managerialism, a management principle imported from the business world. Using these new techniques for the assessment of teaching could push the lecturers on an educational track that was not their choice. The reactions, collected in 2001, contributed to a change in the system of quality assurance.

Laughton [47] did not associate the diagnoses with direct experience of managerialism in the university of the respondent. Managerialism is indeed experienced

differently in the different universities in the U.K. On the basis of 135 interviews in 16 universities in the U.K., Fulton [48] paints the following general picture. He finds that only one of four manager-academics felt comfortable in the new procedures of managerialism. Even the culture of managerialism was not taken for granted by these decision-makers. Nevertheless, at the level of the departments, the pressure to inform the top and to work with targets is increasing, and assessment of teaching and research is part and parcel of the life of a department. These manager-academics, however, did not identify themselves with a top-down decision-making structure. Decentralization (devolved budgets, internal markets for space, responsibility for assessment of teaching and research, etc.), and markets for students, research and service were considered to be more important. This is not a portrait of an extreme form of managerialism, but some characteristics are certainly linked with it.

Similar reactions can be found in other countries. Hulpiau et al. [49] reported on a Belgian university that clearly shows some characteristics of managerialism: accountability of the academics based on performance; target setting; internal allocation of the funding based on results of the departments or research units; a large part of the budget provided by other than state funds; the board being composed of the same number of external members as internal members; and so on. Nevertheless, the management of the university is still in the hands of a vice-chancellor, deans and heads of departments who are elected from and by the academics. In the period discussed in this report [49], the university organization was restructured giving the vice-chancellor and the deans a longer term of office in administration. This university wanted to be an entrepreneurial university, in the words of a former vice-chancellor. The consequence was that decisions were being taken more and more by a small group of decision-makers, who were often unaware of the opinion of the academics concerning some problems, even though all of these decision-makers were academics. Because of the management function, though, they do not teach anymore (or very little), hardly participate in department councils and have little frequent interaction with their former peers. At the top of the

university, the decision was taken that each year all academics would be assessed for each course by all of the students. These assessments had been made previously, but not every year. Students could fill in forms on the Internet using an instrument composed of at least 11 multiple-choice questions, and lecturers could present more questions if they wanted. The results of these surveys were sent to the lecturer and the programme director. For many reasons, the staff reacted very critically once the system was applied. It was not only that the decision for this change of policy was taken at the top, but also at the same time new curricula had to be formulated as part of the Bologna Process, and many other decisions had come top-down. The presentation of an assessment system that did not offer what it promised was not accepted by many of the academics, and the system was criticized at many meetings. This reaction was influenced by the way it was imposed by the university managers, but also by concerns as noted above. Careful discussion with the staff made clear at the end that the academics of this university were not opposed to assessment as such (see also [34]), but that they expected that an instrument would be used that made a clear distinction between assessment for the evaluation of teaching and assessment of quality improvement of teaching. Furthermore, the staff wanted an instrument that did not hinder education innovation.

The introduction to universities of quality assessment instruments that have traditionally been seen as instruments suitable for a factory was not readily accepted by the academics, who considered their independence to be a guarantee of quality work. Instead of collegial collaboration, they suddenly had to undergo the assessment by the youngsters that they themselves were assessing. Moreover, the general application of SET in Europe was not a decision taken by the academics, but emerged in the wake of neo-liberal education policy, where the state asked for accountability from the HEIs and where manager-academics were soon seen as those who could choke academic freedom. Staff had to be convinced that assessment would not touch their freedom of research and would not interfere with educational innovation. As seen in former examples, this takes time and planning.

A good example of the planning of this change has been reported by Dynan and Clifford [50] in a small university in Australia. The action was taken because external quality audit agencies could come in and could make the functioning of the university difficult. The university also wanted a clear picture of its quality in order to inform the consumers (students) in the context of international competition.

Important in this process was that the change was prepared by a special committee in which all important groups of the university were represented. The change was not a free option, as the government wanted accountable universities. The committee did not take for granted that the staff would accept this enthusiastically. Therefore they drew up a five-step plan based on a collaborative implementation model (see also [45]). The objective of the steps was to make the entire institution aware of the necessity of the quality assurance system as well as of the advantages that it could bring to the staff. Over a period of several years, they involved as many staff members as possible in the change process. According to the authors, the process was also quite successful because the main decision-makers (among others, the deans) were members of the Quality Management Committee (see also [44]). The staff realized that the main decision-makers considered this process important enough to invest in it. Moreover, staff members who took initiatives for the realization of the project received financial support for these initiatives. Another positive element was that the staff were familiarized with and trained in the new concepts of the plan, and an external professional quality manager was hired. Staff and leaders were trained to see quality assurance as an integral part of faculty life not something additional to it. Quality assurance had to be part of the yearly planning of the faculties and was not to be seen as something coming from a foreign body.

In spite of the systematic programme for introducing quality assurance in this university, the authors noted that the implementation of formal quality management has not yet permeated in all areas of the university. Among the most receptive are the faculties and the research office. The implementation process could have been hindered by the sudden emergence of complex concepts (producing

aversion to the process) and the creation of a bureaucratic system that is more keen to run the quality assurance process than to use the information for improvement. Once more, we see the same problems arising in this implementation process as in those described above. The authors cite the following problems: the external pressure was not liked by the staff, but accepted; it was hard to convince the staff that this SET could also be useful to themselves; the assessment instruments were weak; the time consumed by the evaluation process was felt by many to be a waste. To give the staff the feeling of ownership of the evaluation system was not easy, but a process of empowerment emerged for those who acquired it. This empowerment is still a problem after 8 years, and there is a fear that the criteria of a coming benchmark approach will still be criticized by the staff.

Conclusion

HEIs in the EU operate in a globalized world, and most of them proclaim their intention to put their institution on the international track. There is no other way to survive in this world of international competition. At the same time, the neo-liberal ideology progressed in Europe and is now determining policy, including education policy. On the one hand, this policy has stimulated an open market and consequently deregulation and privatization, but, on the other hand, it has also made actors (individuals and institutions alike) responsible for what they receive from the state. HEIs, traditionally supported predominantly by the state, became more independent of the state, but also had to look for resources that were no longer being provided by the state. In some countries of the EU, a rather large group of independent HEIs was established. In the wake of this neo-liberal policy, the position of stakeholders of the HEIs changed. More of the stakeholders wanted to have a say in the policy of the HEIs and were interested in the development of the institute. HEI governance also changed in several countries: in some institutions, the main decision-makers no longer have to be elected from among the academics, but external specialists are hired as managers. This is also the case for the board:

external experts are often seen as those who will make the difference. In some institutions this new type of governance goes hand in hand with elements of a new type of management: managerialism. The collegial bureaucracy, however, has not totally disappeared. Research has shown that both systems live together. One characteristic of managerialism, however, is widely accepted by policy-makers and HEI managers, namely accountability. HEIs have to prove that they are providing quality education, and it is here, within a more general framework of quality assurance, that SET was established in most HEIs in Europe.

This establishment has not been without problems, some as yet unresolved. Research has given strong support for the application of the different measures of teaching effectiveness, but, at the same time, many researchers have criticized the weak spots, the primary one being the questionable validity of the instruments used for measuring teaching effectiveness. Because research has shown that the results of the instrument are influenced by the appearance of teachers, the expected assessment results of students, and other factors that have nothing to do with teaching effectiveness, the application of the instruments for SET has regularly been challenged.

Moreover, in some institutions and countries, the introduction of the regular application of SET instruments has often been experienced as enforced by the top, without open consultation with the lecturers as has been the tradition. This change was not seen to be a collegial decision. Lecturers often felt that the traditional culture of the HEI in which the academic had great independence in the organization of the lectures was suddenly being determined by stakeholders who had never been involved in the assessment of their work. Control was accepted from peers, but not directly from other stakeholders, as is possible now with SET. The direct intervention by the government and the HEI managers was experienced as a devaluation of the position of the academic. As the cases presented above indicate, it has become clear that the introduction of SET was not always done with sufficient care. The HEI managers act from a more- or less-managerialist standpoint, while the staff are still thinking along the traditional

collegial lines. Nevertheless, research has shown that the staff are not opposed to assessment, but that they are not happy with the method of implementation. Innovation takes time, which means that it takes many years before the innovation has been institutionalized [50]. In order to attain this objective, many strategies are possible. When we take into account the widespread collegial culture of HEIs in Europe, a coercive strategy does not seem to be the most suitable. An old value system cannot easily be changed. More credit can probably be given to a collaborative model of implementation [45,50,51]. This approach brings managers and staff together, opens discussions, and makes all participants aware of the difficulties and the advantages of the system. It gives those who have to be assessed a better understanding of the functions of the assessment and their consequences. Moreover, it creates a basis for the inclusion of assessment in institutional and departmental policy. Research has shown that innovation is better accepted by teachers if they are involved in its planning and implementation. In this context, it will also be important to pay attention to the educational theory and the collegial values of the lecturers. A collaborative implementation approach fits better in the collegial culture, which still prevails in HEIs. Also important in this context is that lecturers and students are convinced that SET really contributes to improvement of teaching and that the SET instruments measure validly and reliably. As long as teachers and students do not believe in the value of the assessment practice, the assessment of teaching effectiveness will be a burden, not an instrument for improvement of teaching.

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