11th European Quality Assurance Forum

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Quality in context – embedding improvement

Please note that all fields are obligatory. For a detailed description of the submission requirements and Frequently Asked Questions please consult the Call for Contributions.

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Short bio:

Caty Duykaerts holds a master degree in Translation from ISTI (Brussels) and a master degree in Management from the Solvay Business School (ULB Brussels). Language teacher for over 20 years, she became the director of a major adult education centre in 2003. Since October 2008, as head of the Executive unit of AEQES, she's been responsible for implementing external evaluation procedures in the Belgian French-speaking higher education (universities, university colleges, art schools & conservatoires and adult education centres). From October 2012 on, elected member of the ENQA Board, she's committed to its missions and was elected Vice-president in 2015. Also member of the quality assurance WG of EURASHE, she contributes regularly to international and national conferences on higher education quality assurance (ADMEE conferences, ENQA seminars, EQAF 2013, 2015, Malta 2014…)

Name: Geneviève Le Fort

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Short bio:

After studying history of Art and Archeology at the University of Brussels (Belgium) and at the University of Texas in Austin (USA), Geneviève Le Fort obtained in 2000,a doctorate in history of pre-Colombian art (Mayan Civilization). Settled in Switzerland since 1997, she dedicated a few years to teaching and research before directing her professional career towards project management in the field of higher education. From 2006 to 2011, she headed the equality of opportunity service of the University of Neuchâtel where she mainly

managed projects intended for academic renewal. In 2011, she joined AAQ (former OAQ), the Swiss agency of quality assurance, where she was in charge of accreditation of institutions for which she developed diverse instruments. She worked hand in hand with the stakeholders for the production of quality standards and guidelines. She coordinated and conducted procedures of external quality assurance in the field of higher education. She also was in charge of developing the strategic orientation of the agency. Le Fort has been also involved in the European networks of quality assurance; she has chaired a working group on Staff Development of ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) and has initiated the FrAQ-Sup Network, a network for French-speaking quality assurance agencies for higher education.

Name: Julien Lecocq

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Short bio:

After university studies focused on quality assurance and quality management completed in 2003 with a Master, Julien Lecocq explore quality assurance thematic in agro-food industry, paramedical industry and tertiary sector.

He is now part of the administrative staff of HCERES, since 2010, as head of internal quality assurance. Before the foundation of HCERES, he worked for the AERES. At both these organisations, he supports staff members of the agencies in their quality assurance procedures, assures compliance of HCERES methodologies and standards with the ESG (European Standard and Guideline). In 2016, he has steered the self-evaluation process of HCERES, and the writing of its report.

He is also involved into international activities and cooperations : working groups of ENQA, on staff development, on Internal quality assurance of the agency external review process, on impact of quality assurance, participation on European projects (CeQuint, Qache). He is strongly involved into the FrAQ-SUP Network (network of French speaking quality assurance agencies) and its activities: annual seminar, publications…

Name: François Pernot

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Short bio:

François Pernot is director of the European and International Department (EID) (former "European and International Mission" (EIM)) from 2013 to March 2016) of the HCERES (former AERES) (since September 1st 2013).

Besides the EIM (today the EID) has set up a French-speaking network of quality agencies, with the CTI (Commission of engineers' Titles), AAQ (Swiss agency) and AEQES (Belgian agency).

As member of ENQA the AERES and then the HCERES participated via the EIM and now EID in the working groups "Excellence in Higher Education", "Impact of quality assurance", "Staff Development".

In November 2014, François Pernot followed in Oslo the ENQA training session to be an expert and to take part in the assessment of Quality Assurance Agencies.

As a Professor of university in Early Modern History and Modern History at the University of Cergy-Pontoise (France), François Pernot is teaching in Bachelor, Master and PhD Programs. He is also the author of various books, works, articles, reports and papers on political, military and diplomatic history of Modern Europe and European countries. He works also on defence, security, armament and arms in the XXIst century and on the XXIst century wars (climatic wars, cyberwar, energetic wars...).

Name: Julie Nolland

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Short bio:

After her master's degree in cinema and audio-visual art, Julie occupied different administrative & management positions in the sectors of fashion and historic monuments.

Since the beginning of 2013, she is Quality Manager & International Project Manager at the French national accreditation body for engineering programmes "Commission des Titres d'Ingénieurs" (CTI). As such, she is in charge of the follow-up of the working group on Quality, the award of the European quality label in engineering "EUR-ACE" and of the administration of the IT system. At international level, she represents CTI abroad and participates in various organisations and working groups (EQAR, ECA, FraQ-Sup, OIQ, …), co-ordinates accreditation procedures abroad and organises events such as CTI's annual international symposium.

If you are submitting a paper or workshop proposal, please do not register for the event online until the results of the selection process have been announced. Each selected paper and workshop at EQAF 2016 will benefit from one reduced fee, which will be applied through a special registration process.

After the Forum, the full text of all papers presented at the Forum will be published on the Forum website. If you do not wish your paper to be published, please indicate so here. This has no consequences on the selection of the papers.

Proposal

Title: Quality assurance frameworks in context: a diversified implementation of the ESG by various French-speaking quality assurance agencies

Abstract (150 words max):

Six quality assurance agencies have recently decided to be part of an active yet informal network (réseau FrAQ-Sup) with the goal of sharing professional experience and supporting the development of a quality culture within the French-speaking higher education sector. They jointly organise quality events and support various projects. One of them was to translate into French the newly revised version of the European standards and guidelines (ESG 2015). This task has lead the agencies to examine further and compare their national QA frameworks and quality standards and discover how much they were alike and to which extent they would differ. This paper is about the lessons learnt from this comparative analysis.

The paper is based on: research

Has this paper previously been published/presented elsewhere? If yes, give details.

No

Text of paper (3000 words max):

1. Introduction

Six quality assurance agencies have recently decided to be part of an active yet informal network (réseau FrAQ-Sup) with the goal of sharing professional experience and supporting the development of a quality culture within the French-speaking higher education sector. They jointly organise quality events and support various projects. One of them was to translate into French the newly revised version of the European standards and guidelines (ESG 2015). This task has lead the agencies to examine further and compare their national QA frameworks and quality standards and discover how much they were alike and to which extent they would differ. This paper is about the lessons learnt from this comparative analysis.

2. Translating the ESG

The ESG are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education. They form a framework which may be used and implemented in different ways by different institutions, agencies and countries. Indeed, the EHEA is characterised by its diversity of political systems, HE systems, socio-cultural and educational traditions, languages, aspirations and expectations. This makes a single monolithic approach to quality and quality assurance in higher education inappropriate.

Any translator would argue that translation is altogether a science, an art and a skill. From the very beginning, this exercice confronted the agencies with conceptual and linguistic difficulties: first, they needed to make sure they understood properly the ESG written in English in order to convey the meaning and subtleties of the original text. Then, they realised that selecting the appropriate French words for the francophone reader was even

more challenging: « what French » to choose? that from France? from Switzerland? from Belgium? …

To give a single example, the words « learning outcomes » were finally translated into French by « acquis d'apprentissage » after making clear that « apprentissage » meant any process of learning and not « apprenticeship » – as used mainly in France.

3. Quality standards in each country

Every agency contributing to this analysis has internal mechanisms to involve internal and external stakeholders in the building of their evaluation standards: working groups, board meeting, submission of draft version of standards... For example, 3 agencies expose below their internal process linked to the elaboration and/or revision of their standards.

3.1. AEQES

It took AEQES almost two years to develop its present reference framework which is made of five criteria: the first and the fifth ones addressing the HEI governance and quality assurance policies and practices; the second, third and fourth ones dealing respectively with the relevance, the internal coherence and the efficiency of the programme(s). Indeed, AEQES implements a programmatic approach of the evaluation even if its framework – as the analysis will show – encompasses institutional dimensions.

In order to elaborate this reference framework, AEQES set up a working group (representative of the diversity of HEIs) that benchmarked reference frameworks from various European countries and reformulated the previous items into criteria. The draft was crossed-checked with the 2005 ESG, then with their revised 2015 version.

3.2. CTI

CTI's last referential documents were launched in February 2016 after two years of updating process.

Standards documents are revised every three years, and a specific working group is set up during the third. This working group is composed on a parity basis, with half professional and half academic members of CTI's plenary assembly, experts and staff members. The group meets at least once a month and some meetings are opened to stakeholders. At the end of the process, the first draft is sent to CTI's stakeholders for comments and the working group implements the remarks afterwards.

For this version one year was added to the usual work length because major changes occured both in the national and EHEA context. The working group decided that one more year was necessary to take into account these evolutions in CTI's standards (2013 Fioraso law, 2014 laws about internships, interprofessional agreement about QA, evolution of the apprenticeship status, 2015 adoption of the new ESG and EAFSG, …).

CTI also needs to take into account incoming matters in deliberations approved by the plenary session. They are communicated to engineering HEI and published on CTI's website. CTI standards are amended yearly with those deliberations.

3.3. HCERES

In the continuous improvement quality cycle of HCERES, following each evaluation campaign, each department organises and runs a process to gather feedback from the experts, evaluated entities and supervising ministries, as appropriate. The findings from this feedback are used to analyse and revise the methodology and standards.

Prior to their publication, all amendments to evaluation reference documents (standards) are discussed with representatives of institutions and their supervising ministries. The changes are presented and HCERES collects all observations and comments. Each revision is put before the Board for approval before publication.

This cycle requires HCERES to consider the scope of all changes. Feedback from the evaluation process leads to regular adjustments and improvements, without however prejudicing the equal treatment of evaluated parties from one group of evaluations to another. The process also enables HCERES to respond to changes in the higher education and research system by adapting its methodologies. In this case, the revisions are more thoroughgoing but necessary, to reflect the reality of the system evaluated.

4. Comparative analysis of the QA frameworks

4.1. Methodology

To build up the comparative analysis, a matrix was completed in relation to the ten standards of ESG, part one. Step by step each agency completed the table with the items from its own QA framework. It is worth noting that the Canadian (CEEC) and the Senagalese (ANAQ-SUP) agencies did so whereas not being part of the EHEA. The table was then discussed and commented. It gave a first hint at converging themes and concepts of quality assurance while showing differences in the terminology and areas looked at by each national system beyond the ESG.

4.2. Converging and diverging elements

The analysis of converging keywords and concepts of the new ESG (Part 1) implementation in the six French-speaking agencies frameworks enlightens the common goal and shared objectives of the global QA community.

It clearly appears that despite the diversified geographical contexts and challenges, the variation of higher education systems and QA approaches, the ESG constitute a common language shared and understood way beyond national borders but also EHEA, even though the accent can be put on different aspects depending on the agency's context (national, field, specific topics awareness, …).

It is necessary to specify at first that our analysis compares standards targeting different purposes: institutional approach or evaluation of programmes. While all of the ESG of the part one are addressed in the standards, their integration varies.

The focus of the ESG is on learning and teaching in Higher Education. The way the national standards reflect the ESG is more obvious and direct when the standards focus on the programme level, while the standards focus on the level of the institution, the standards use "filters", or "an angle of vision" to address the ESG, like the strategy or policy of the institution.

The approach of each agency differs, although items treated by the external standards of quality assurance are the same. The Swiss agency, AAQ refers more directly and regularly to "quality management system" than other agencies do. As for AEQES, the Belgian agency, it refers to institution's "plans", its "procedures", its "mechanisms", while HCERES broaches the various angles of the institution's policy, that is to say: quality, human resources' management, training policy…

The reading of the standards used for the analysis highlights that even if there are various apprehensions of the French language, the common phrasing used for the translation performed by the network can be found (partially of course) in each agency's framework.

This is not a systematic statement, but the understanding seems rather transversal for concepts such as in ESG 1 .1 « strategy », « policy » or « internal and external stakeholder ».

Therefore a question can be raised on the impact of this crossborder translation work itself on the agencies' frameworks elaboration procedures.

Besides from the common use of some keywords and concepts, there are similarities but also distinctions in the understanding and implementation, which is introduced below sorted by ESG.

ESG 1.1

Standards of European agencies address the availability of a quality assurance policy in connection with the strategy of the institution. The Swiss system's standards deal directly with a strategy of quality assurance. The differences in the approaches to this ESG lie mainly in the publicity of this policy, notion which is sometimes implicit in these standards

ESG 1.2

For the ESG 1.2, standards used for the comparison show important differences. AEQES and CEEC assess programmes while others standards assess of institutions. Thus for AEQES and CEEC working-out and approval mechanisms of programmes are directly mentioned in their standards, when other standards approach this ESG by the means of programmes policy (HCERES) or conformity to programmes objectives.

ESG 1.3

This ESG is particular since it introduces a concept which did not exist in the 2005 version: the concept of student-centered teaching and learning and specially that of the active role of the student in the learning process. For the first dimension of this standard, only the CTI translates directly the ESG putting "the student in the center of the teaching and learning process" (TLP). Other agencies share the same understanding about « student centered learning » but they have a different way of phrasing it. For AEQES, the concept is phrased in the following way «The HEI/entity ensures that the arrangements set up for providing students with guidance, orientation and support in their learning paths are fair, adequate and appropriate for achieving the study programme's objectives ». For HCERES teaching methods shall be "adapted to its various audiences", moreover, "the training methods implemented shall comply with the expectations of students"; and "the institution shall develop an educational innovation policy and adapt its teaching methods, in particular with regard to the production of digital resources".

Another aspect put forward in this ESG's implementation is the communication towards students and the consciousness of his/her specificities.

However, even if an active participation of students in the governance of the HEIs is required or recommended, none of our agencies consider the active role of the student in the TLP yet, this dimension has to take root in the HE national area before. For the moment, we identify a stress on the idea of the active role of student mainly relates to the teaching evaluation processes of the HEI.

ESG 1.4

For this ESG, only ANAQ-SUP standards resume all the aspects (enrolment, progress and evaluation). In European agencies' standards evaluation of students is generally missing, and CTI does not address progress either. HCERES standards stands out by the emphasis put on students success, and goes further than certification with a follow up of students' professional integration.

ESG 1.5

Staff development thematic is included in each standard of our agencies, except for the CTI. For AEQES, AAQ, HCERES and CEEC, this thematic area apply to every kind of staff: administrative staff and teachers. CEEC goes further and also address staff's motivation development in its standards ; AAQ deals with these aspects on the angle of carreer of employees ; HCERES and ANAQ-SUP, treat this issue regarding adequacy of competencies to the needs of the institution.

ESG 1.6

Regarding standard 1.6 about « appropriate funding » and « adequate and readily accessible learning resources » provided by an HEI, the various French-speaking agencies of the network FrAQ-Sup put a stress on the guarantees the HEI must provide notably in « human support, infrastructure and financial resources to make the ESR's objectives come true » (AAQ), or « the matching of human, physical and financial resources with training requirements » (CEEC). Only HCERES does not assess this standard in terms of adequacy and guarantee of attainment of the objectives, but rather in terms of availability and organization of « human, physical and financial resources to assist student learning » and awareness of operating costs. For HCERES the main criteria is that human, physical and financial resources exist, are organized and known, whether they are adequate or not for the proper functioning of the training is significant but does not seem the main criteria to take into account.

ESG 1.7

Regarding standard 1.7 on collecting, analyzing and using relevant information for the effective management of their programmes by an HEI there are no significant differences between agencies. It can just be noticed that only HCERES and ANAQ put a stress on the existence of an information system and that only CEEC points out that such data are significant for the assessment of learning programmes and activities in general.

ESG 1.8

Standard 1.8 on the publishing by an HEI of information on its activities and programmes on a clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily access way is handled with different perspectives according to agencies. On the one hand AEQES and CTI put a stress on the need to have quantitative and qualitative information on the proposed programmes and degrees, and on the other HCERES insists on the reception and counseling for prospective and current students, the expected skills and the trades intended. Only CEEC mentions that such information are not only aimed at students but also teachers, and ANAQ is the only agency to speak of informing about its teachers and/or researchers' research.

ESG 1.9

Regarding standard 1.9 about the periodically monitoring and reviewing by HEIs of their programmes to ensure that such programmes are continuously improved, and about information given on these assessments, there are very few differences in the way this standard is dealt with by the various agencies. Only CTI and HCERES may not provide as many details as the other agencies on assessed institutions, the expected outcomes and objectives of such a periodic programme assessment by HEIs.

ESG 1.10

Finally regarding standard 1.10 about periodic processes of external quality assurance of HEI in line with the ESG, CTI and HCERES prefer the term of external assessment to that of external quality assurance and only CTI and ANAQ mention that HEI could be assessed by other assessing institutions, including foreign ones. Concerning this standard, it is necessary to point out, that HCERES does not consider it as a standard because, by the law, all the HEI, the programs and the structures of research in France must be evaluated every 5 years.

After this short analysis, what could be investigated and documented further is the potential impact of the shared language (i.e. French) in the approach of QA and ESG implementation.

5. Beyond the ESG ?

Interestingly, this comparative exercice has shed light on the areas that are dealt with by the QA frameworks beyond the scope of the ESG.

For the sake of example, the Swiss have written in their legislation the principle of gender equal opportunities and therefore this principle has been translated in their QA framework (2.5), which includes also requirements in the field of sustainability (2.4). As to AEQES, the framework stresses the pedagogical internal coherence of the study programmes and its criterion 3 aims to assess the coherence between the following aspects: the intended learning outcomes as stated by the study programme, the programme contents that are actually carried out, the learning provisions and activities, the overall design of the programme, the sequencing of learning activities or provisions, the time foreseen for achieving the intended learning outcomes; the assessed learning outcomes, and the criteria and modalities for assessing them.

6. Conclusion

To conclude with, this comparative analysis of the six French-speaking QA frameworks in light of the ESG showed that whatever the focus of the QA approaches and instruments (institutions, study programmes), the themes that are being looked at mostly coincide. The analysis also indicated that terminology and concepts vary, as do the overall structure of the QA frameworks, their granularity and the focus on specific elements. Moreover, the QA frameworks somehow look into themes beyond the ESG, but differ according to the diverse national contexts. The ESG may be the common framework ; they allow for a diversified implementation according to the local contexts and leave room for expressing – through language and terminology – a specific vision of quality.

Discussion questions:

The ESG claim to be applicable to different contexts while providing harmonizing quality assurance guidelines. Isn't it a paradoxical situation? In your opinion, how much context-dependent a process of implementing of the ESG is? According to your experience, what are, in quality assurance, the main drivers nowadays: the internationalization trend? the European dimension? the national or regional contexts? Can you illustrate this with a few examples?

Please submit your proposal by sending this form, in Word format, by 25 July 2016 to QAForum@eua.be. The file should be named using the last names of the authors, e.g. Smith_Jones.doc. Please do not send a hard copy or a PDF file.