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Short bio (150 words max):

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Proposal

Title:

The 'software of the mind' behind employee involvement in quality and diversity in higher education

Abstract (150 words max): 183 employees of 10 higher education departments described their own attitude and role with respect to quality and diversity. The results reveal rather low levels of involvement. Comparison of organizational culture preference and beliefs about quality and diversity between four groups of employees (pioneers, enthusiasts, neutrals, sceptics) revealed that preference for an innovative and non-traditional organizational culture is related to involvement for the two policy areas. Preference for market orientation relates positively to involvement in quality and preference for sustainability relates positively to involvement in diversity. Three dimensions could be recognized in the beliefs about quality and diversity: quality assurance, talent development and openness to diversity. Surprisingly, beliefs concerning openness to diversity related more strongly to quality involvement than beliefs concerning quality. More in line with the expectations, we found indications that involvement in diversity is embedded in openness to diversity and beliefs concerning talent development.

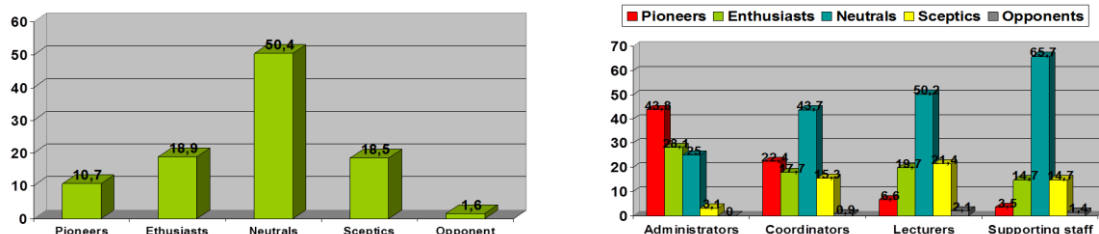
The paper is based on: research

Text of paper (3000 words max):

Introduction

In order to guarantee and enhance quality in higher education, quality assurance systems are designed and implemented in higher education. A gap has been experienced between such a managerial approach to quality assurance and the beliefs and expectations of the staff concerning their work, work environment and work conditions (EUA, 2006; Kolsaker, 2008). A second order consequence is that in most higher education institutions only a small part of the staff is really involved and engaged in quality assurance, especially in the professoriate (Berings, 2001; 2013).

Figure 1 Involvement in Quality Assurance



This finding fits with the observation of other scholars like Newton (2000), Harvey and Stensaker (2008, p. 427): “while systems, procedures and rules are being laid down, [...] there is still a lack of staff and student attachment and active involvement in these processes”.

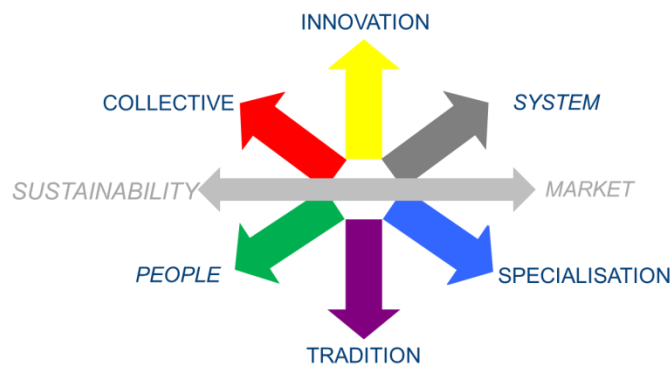
After the millennium switch diversity and sustainability also emerged as prominent and growing policy domains (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002; Gurin, Nagda & Lopez, 2004; Wals & Jickling, 2002). For these policy domains as well employee involvement and engagement are mentioned as an important condition for policy development (AASHE, 2012; Worthington, Stanley & Lewis, 2014).

To get higher levels of involvement, it remains important to gain more insight in the ‘software of the mind’ of employees. Two kinds of ‘software of the mind’ are considered: organizational culture preference and beliefs about quality and diversity.

Organizational culture preference

Organizational culture preference forms part of a ‘quality culture’ (Bendemacher, Egbrink, Wolfhagen & Dolmans, 2013; Sursock, 2011; Vettori, 2012). One way to explore quality culture can be found in the conceptual framework and the annex assessment instrument Cultural Mirrors (Berings, Beerten, Hulpiau, & Verhesschen, 2011; Berings, 2013), which allows educational departments to reflect on their own organizational culture (Berings & Grieten, 2012). Recently this tool has been complemented with two extra ‘external’ orientations: market orientation and sustainability (Berings, 2015).

Figure 2 Cultural imagesPLUS



This extension reflects the distinction between two basic functions of organizational culture: internal integration and external adaptation (Schein, 1992). The original six images represent the internal focus: how people work and want to work in their organization. The supplementary bipolarity represents the external focus: the challenge of organizations to find a sound balance between market orientation and sustainability.

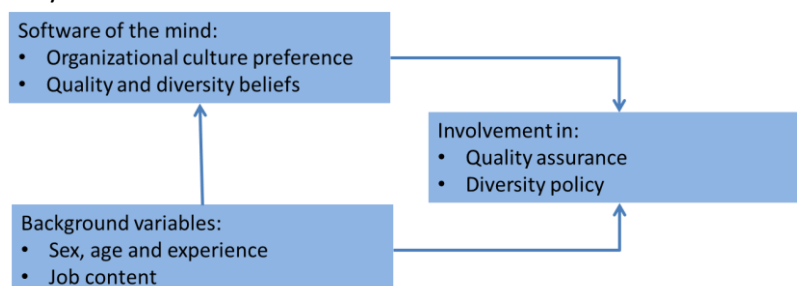
Specific beliefs

Beliefs about quality and diversity possibly play a role in employee involvement. More specifically, we wanted to know to what extent employees endorse the principles or objectives of quality assurance and diversity policies, such as the idea of attaining international standards for quality, customer orientation, inclusion, maximization of chances, and the development of diversity competencies.

Software of the mind behind involvement

This paper explores the ‘software of the mind’ that could play a role in employee involvement in quality and diversity.

Figure 3 Analysis model





Sample

For the purpose of this study, we collected survey data (N=183) in ten departments of two higher education institutions, one in Flanders, Belgium (N=43) and one in the Netherlands (N=140). Further specifications of the sample can be found in Table 1.

Measures

Involvement

The respondents were asked to describe their attitude and their role. Their attitude was surveyed by the question: “How can you best describe your attitude to quality assurance/diversity policies in your organization” with response categories: (1) enthusiast; (2) neutral; (3) sceptical; (4) disapproving. Respondents could describe their role, answering the question: “How can you best describe your role in quality assurance/diversity policies in your organization?” with response categories: (1) pioneer; (2) collaborator; (3) follower; (4) opponent. In order to construct one scale for involvement we combined the questions (attitude and role) into one: (1) pioneers; (2) enthusiasts; (3); neutrals; (4) sceptics; (5) opponents (Berings, 2013).

Organizational culture preference

To measure organizational culture preference (and perception) we used the Cultural MirrorPLUS inventory: an extension of the instrument Cultural Mirrors used in a study on quality culture, promoted by the Flemish Bologna Expert Team (Berings et al., 2011). Six holistic descriptions represent the internal cultural orientation. Image 1 represents the innovation-oriented organization, in which proactive external adaptation and an internal focus on continuous improvement are the essential elements. Image 2, in contrast, reflects the tradition-oriented organization, to which a conservative reflex and reluctance towards innovation and organizational change are central. Image 3 is the people-oriented organization. Its core elements are confidence in people and room for self-determination and creativity. Image 4, in contrast, describes the system-oriented organization, which focuses on coordination, standardization and formalization. Image 5 and 6 are the collectively oriented organization and the specialization-oriented organization, respectively. In the collectively oriented organization sharing ideas and values, social problem solving and team work are taken for granted. The specialization-oriented organization is conceived around a number of professionals specialized in different disciplines and each having their specific skills. In the expanded version (Berings, 2015) the external focus was added by formulating two extra organizational images: market orientation and sustainability. The striving for excellence, competitiveness and reputation are core elements of the image ‘market orientation’ (Image 7), while inclusion, maximizing chances and social responsibility are core elements of the image ‘sustainability’ (Image 8). Respondents were asked to answer two questions for each of these eight images of organization: a) Would you like to work in organization X?; b) to what extent does your organization resemble X? The respondents could answer on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging respectively from ‘absolutely not’ to ‘with much pleasure’ and from ‘not at all’ to ‘entirely’.

Quality and diversity mind-set

The respondents were confronted with fifteen propositions related to quality and diversity. These propositions were related to the idea of quality assurance (e.g. “The quality of education meets international standards.”), client orientation (e.g. Students have the opportunity to develop their talents to the maximum and by doing so build a career for

themselves), inclusion or maximization of chances (e.g. “One puts in an effort to maximize the opportunities for students who start the programme under unfavourable circumstances”), development of diversity competences (e.g. “Students are encouraged to develop a multicultural mind-set and acquire general competences with respect to diversity”). For these fifteen items we asked: “How important is this feature for you?”. The respondents could answer on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from ‘not at all important’ to ‘utmost important’. We conducted an explorative Principle Component Analysis. three interpretable components were recognized. The first component refers to quality assurance, the second to talent development and the third to openness to diversity. We labelled these three component shortly as ‘quality’ (Q), ‘talent’ (T) and diversity (D).

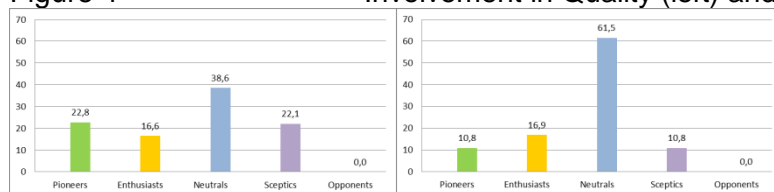
Background variables

The following background variables have been registered: sex, age, experience and job content. For job content four categories were distinguished: 1) ‘administrators’: employees with management as their main task; 2) ‘coordinators’: employees who fulfil a coordination role besides education or research; 3) ‘lecturers’: employees with exclusively educational or research tasks; 4) ‘supporting’: employees with mainly administrative, supporting or service tasks.

Results

Employee involvement

Figure 4 Involvement in Quality (left) and diversity (right)



The figures above show quite a different distribution for quality, as compared to diversity. Involvement as well as scepticism seem to be higher for quality. With respect to diversity, indifference is widespread.

Table 1 Involvement in quality (Q) en diversity (D)

		N	pioneers	enthusiasts	neutrals	sceptics	X ²
Gender (Q)	male	90	21.4	14.3	36.9	27.4	3.40 NS
	female	56	18.2	21.8	43.6	16.4	
Gender (D)	male	90	9.3	7.0	66.3	17.4	16.6 **
	female	56	10.7	26.8	60.7	1.8	
Age (Q)	<30	16	7.1	21.4	42.9	28.6	7.17 NS
	30-39	41	13.2	18.4	50.0	18.4	
	40-49	34	27.3	12.1	39.4	21.2	
	50+	54	25.0	17.3	30.8	26.9	
Age (D)	<30	16	14.3	21.4	57.1	7.1	12.3 NS
	30-39	41	2.5	22.5	62.5	12.5	
	40-49	34	5.9	5.9	79.4	8.8	
	50+	54	17.3	13.5	55.8	13.5	
Experience (Q)	<5 years	50	19.1	17.0	51.1	12.8	10.7 °
	5-10 years	40	21.1	26.3	26.3	26.3	
	>10 years	54	22.6	9.4	37.7	30.2	
Experience (D)	<5 years	50	6.3	20.8	64.6	8.3	11.2 °
	5-10 years	40	17.5	10.0	70.0	2.5	
	>10 years	54	9.4	13.2	58.5	18.9	
Position (Q)	administrators	15	66.7	8.3	25.0	0.0	17.1 *
	coordinators	21	27.8	16.7	33.3	22.2	
	lecturers	120	17.0	17.0	39.4	26.6	
	supporting	27	19.0	19.0	47.6	14.3	
Position (D)	administrators	15	41.7	16.7	41.7	0.0	23.5 **
	coordinators	21	11.1	16.7	61.5	11.1	
	lecturers	120	4.2	19.8	62.5	13.5	
	supporting	27	22.7	4.5	68.2	4.5	

Note: ***: p<.001; **= p<.01; *: p<.05; °: p<.10

The results in Table 1 tell us that the involvement varies with some background variables. Female employees seem to be more involved in diversity policies than males, and the involvement in both quality and diversity is partly determined by the job content. Scepticism is mostly found in the group of 'lecturers', and pioneers are mostly found in the group of administrators.

Organizational culture: preference versus perception

In the table below we present the descriptive statistics as well as a gap analysis for preference versus perception. We conducted a paired t-test between preference and perception.

Table 2 Cultural Mirrors: preference versus perception

		Preference		perception		gap		
Internal		M	sd	M	sd	d	t	sign
1	People	4.25	.81	3.30	1.18	.95	9.72	***
2	Collective	4.14	.65	3.19	1.02	.95	11.6	***
3	Innovation	3.78	.88	2.96	1.04	.82	9.02	***
4	Specialisation	3.20	1.04	2.60	.89	.60	6.97	***
5	System	3.00	1.01	2.68	.94	.32	3.33	**
6	Tradition	2.62	1.02	2.62	1.09	-.01	-.06	NS
External		M	sd	M	sd	d	t	sign
7	Market	3.26	.86	2.56	.94	.69	8.60	***
8	Sustainability	3.74	.77	2.98	.89	.76	9.82	***

Note: ***: $p < .001$; **: $p < .01$; *: $p < .05$; °: $p < .10$

The most attractive organizational images are: People, Collective and Innovation. The largest gap between preference and perception has been found for the same three images. Concerning the external orientation both market and sustainability orientation are valued, but sustainability has received a higher weight than market orientation. For both external orientations, there may be a change dynamic, reflected by a large gap between preference and perception.

Quality and diversity mind-set

Table 3 shows how important employees find different aspects of quality and diversity. For most of the items a majority of the employees has given a weight of 4 or 5, meaning “very important” or “utmost important” respectively.

Table 3 *Quality and diversity mind-set*

Importance (%)	Scale	1	2	3	4	5	% st4+5	M	sd
1 Education is aligned with real practices and case studies from the field.	t	0.0	0.7	12.0	60.0	27.3	87.3	4.14	.63
2 One puts in efforts in a systematic way to guarantee the quality of the programme and increase it where possible.	Q	0.0	1.4	21.6	64.2	12.8	77.0	3.89	.62
3 Students have the opportunity to develop their talents to the maximum and by doing so build a career for themselves.	T	0.0	2.7	24.8	58.4	14.1	72.5	3.84	.69
4 The quality of education meets international standards.	Q	2.0	12.7	32.2	48.3	14,8	63.1	3.71	.82
5 Students are prepared to function in a very diverse society.	t	0.0	3.4	33.6	51.7	11.4	63.1	3.71	.71
6 Challenges in today's society are addressed in education.	t	0.0	6.7	31.3	54.7	7.3	62.0	3.63	.72
7 One puts in an effort to give exceptionally talented students opportunities to excel.	T	0.7	7.3	33.1	55.0	4.0	59.0	3.54	.72
8 People with disabilities can access and use the premises, rooms and facilities.	d	0.7	11.3	29.3	48.7	10.0	58.7	3.56	.85
9 The critical mind is formed and the ability to take a stand is developed.	t	0.0	5.4	36.2	50.3	8.1	58.4	3.61	.71
10 Education reflects current scientific research and is attuned to new scientific trends.	t	0.0	10.7	32.9	49.0	7.4	56.4	3.53	.78
11 Students have the opportunity to align their study programme with their needs and ambitions.	T	0.0	12.2	37.2	41.2	9.5	50.7	3.48	.83
12 Students are encouraged to develop a multicultural mind-set and acquire general competences with respect to diversity.	D	2.0	14.9	33.1	44.6	5,4	50.0	3.36	.87
13 Staff are encouraged to develop a multicultural mind-set and acquire general competences with respect to diversity.	D	3.4	12.9	35.4	42.9	5,4	48.3	3.34	.89
14 One puts in an effort to maximize the opportunities for students who start the programme under unfavourable circumstances.	d	0.0	8.6	45.7	41.1	4.6	45.7	3.42	.72
15 Efforts are made to help students with another philosophical, social or cultural background feel at home in the organization.	D	5.4	14.9	40.5	35.8	3,4	39.2	3.17	.91

Note: 1: not at all important; 2: a little bit important; 3: rather important; 4: very important; 5: utmost important.

Employee involvement in quality and the ‘software of the mind’

With respect to the internal cultural orientation, the results presented in Table 4 reveal that pioneers have the highest preference scores for people orientation, collective orientation and innovation and the lowest preference score for tradition. The group of enthusiasts has the highest score on specialization. Compared to other groups the sceptics have the highest score on system and tradition. But for the six internal orientations, the differences between the four groups are only statistically significant for innovation and tradition.

With respect to the external orientation the market orientation is mostly endorsed by the pioneers in quality assurance. For the three dimensions in the mind-set concerning quality and diversity only for ‘openness to diversity’ F-tests revealed statistically significant

differences. In other words concerning the *assumptions on quality assurance and talent development*, there seems to be a relatively high consensus over the four groups.

Table 4 Involvement in quality assurance and the ‘software of the mind’

	Pioneers		Enthusiasts		Neutrals		Sceptics		F
	M	sd	M	sd	M	sd	M	sd	
Internal									
1 People	4.45	.79	3.96	.91	4.16	.80	4.31	.74	2.01
2 Collective	4.36	.65	4.00	.72	4.05	.61	4.16	.68	1.97
3 Innovation	4.30	.81	3.88	.85	3.59	.80	3.59	.95	5.74***
4 Specialisation	2.94	.83	3.50	1.06	3.16	1.11	3.25	1.16	1.36
5 System	3.00	1.03	2.75	.94	3.05	.94	3.13	1.07	.73
6 Tradition	2.27	.88	2.58	1.10	2.54	.04	3.06	.98	3.51*
External									
7 Market	3.76	.79	3.33	.92	3.13	.85	3.13	.71	4.77
8 Sustainable	4.00	.70	3.75	.61	3.59	.78	3.72	.77	2.17°
Mind-set									
9 Quality	4.03	.61	3.79	.76	3.71	.51	3.75	.71	1.90
10 Talent	3.74	.64	3.79	.53	3.53	.61	3.47	.64	2.07
11 Diversity	3.57	.64	3.53	.75	3.10	.89	3.09	.75	3.82*

Note: ***: p<.001; **= p<.01; *: p<.05; °: p<.10

Employee involvement in diversity and the ‘software of the mind’

The relationship of the ‘software of the mind’ with involvement in diversity policies has been explored in the same way (Table 5). With respect to the organizational cultural preferences, involvement in diversity seems to be related to a more general attitude toward change (innovation versus tradition). Remarkably, the preference for system orientation and tradition is highest for the group of sceptics. This group seems to prefer a relatively predictable work environment.

Table 5 Involvement in diversity policies and the ‘software of the mind’

	Pioneers		Enthusiasts		Neutrals		Sceptics		F
	M	sd	M	sd	M	sd	M	sd	
Internal									
1 People	4.50	.73	4.20	.76	4.25	.82	4.13	.88	.66
2 Collective	4.38	.72	4.16	.47	4.09	.69	4.06	.68	.92
3 Innovation	4.50	.63	3.88	.88	3.77	.82	3.19	.98	6.81 ***
4 Specialisation	3.13	.81	3.04	.98	3.23	1.08	3.31	1.30	.30
5 System	2.94	.93	2.80	.76	2.98	1.00	3.56	1.01	2.19°
6 Tradition	2.13	.72	2.24	.83	2.67	1.04	3.31	1.01	5.37**
External									
7 Market	3.75	.68	3.16	.69	3.26	.93	3.13	.81	1.95
8 Sustainable	4.44	.63	3.84	.55	3.64	.74	3.44	.89	6.76***
Mindset									
9 Quality	3.97	.59	3.84	.55	3.77	.68	3.78	.48	.46
10 Talent	3.90	.67	3.82	.41	3.61	.62	3.17	.56	5.22**
11 Diversity	3.83	.69	3.64	.66	3.20	.72	2.79	1.04	7.44***

Note: ***: p<.001; **= p<.01; *: p<.05; °: p<.10



With respect to the external orientation, the sustainable orientation is mostly endorsed by the pioneers in diversity. For the three dimensions in the mindset concerning quality and diversity, for 'openness to diversity' as well as for 'talent development', F-tests revealed statistically significant differences. In other words, an orientation toward talent development and openness toward diversity seems to determine one's involvement in diversity policies.

Conclusions

The main purpose of this study was to shed light on the 'software of the mind' behind employee involvement in quality assurance and diversity policies. The results reveal rather low levels of involvement. More specifically, scepticism toward quality is widespread within the professoriate, and high levels of indifference toward diversity are found for all personnel categories. With respect to diversity, involvement is higher for women than for men. In order to get more insight in the 'software of the mind' behind employee involvement, we compared organizational culture preference and beliefs about quality and diversity between four categories: pioneers, enthusiasts, neutrals and sceptics. Preference for an innovative and non-traditional organizational culture is related to involvement for the two policy areas. Moreover, preference for market orientation relates positively to involvement in quality, and preference for sustainability relates positively to involvement in diversity. Three dimensions could be recognized in the beliefs about quality and diversity: quality assurance, talent development and openness to diversity. Surprisingly, beliefs concerning openness to diversity relate more strongly with quality involvement than beliefs concerning quality. More in line with the expectations, we found indications that involvement in diversity is embedded in openness to diversity and beliefs concerning talent development.

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Expected learning outcomes for participants:

The participants can enhance their insight in the levels and antecedent of employee involvement in quality and diversity. They learn also how they can stimulate reflection on organisational culture and assumptions about quality and diversity.



Please submit your proposal by sending this form, in Word format, by 24 July 2017 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.