

CIEA 2014

Approaches of quality assurance models on adult education provisions

Anca Prisăcariu^{a*}^a*University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania*

Abstract

The present paper aims at elaborating a comparative analysis on quality assurance approaches and their impact on adult education across European Higher Education Area. As soon as Quality Assurance was recognised as one of the major concerns of Bologna Process, the concept started being reflected in national legislation, policy making at national level and quality assurance agencies provisions. At a later stage, Quality Assurance managed to substantially influence institutional priorities and focuses, no matter if external quality assurance reviews had formal and financial consequences or not. We can only speak about good quality education if also the Social Dimension is of good quality. Ensuring equal opportunities in higher education is not only a question of social justice, but also about improving and strengthening the quality of higher education, therefore quality assurance must take account of the social dimension of higher education in making certain that institutions would operate with the goal of fostering equality within the academic world and ultimately in society. Quality Assurance should strengthen its role in regularly monitor and foster the access, succession and completion rates of underrepresented groups in higher education (ESU, 2011).

Since social dimension might be defined as all obstacles to access, progress and completion in higher education (with the strongest emphasis on obstacles to access), we can state that ensuring access of adult population to higher education is a matter of social dimension as it was included in Bologna Process in 2001 (Prague Communiqué, 2001). Countries have different cultures and financial possibilities, universities are located in a specific social environment, often serve different groups in society. Some study programmes are more open to underrepresented groups. Students have different needs; they can come from different socio-economic backgrounds, can be mobile students, students coming from rural areas, adult students, etc. The main objective of this paper is to analyse to which extent do different models of Quality Assurance processes manage to reflect the provisions and practices related to adult education and the priority that is being given to adult education in institutional practices. Some models look at the internal quality assurance system and processes, while others look at the results of these processes – the quality itself, some models look at the achievement of Intended Learning Outcomes, while others look at the vision, mission and objectives of Higher Education Institutions. With widening access agendas gaining momentum and the recognition of the importance of

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +40 755 085 288
E-mail address: anca.prisacariu@eqar.eu

support structures, quality assurance mechanisms need to pay closer attention to adult education as crucial segment of social dimension in higher education.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University.

Keywords: adult education; quality assurance; social dimension.

1. Introduction

When speaking of social dimension in terms of higher education there are two main directions. According to the EHEA, social dimension has been defined as “functioning under the principle of equality and being able to respond to social needs as well as economic goals of the European societies” (ESU, 2011). This definition can be used to show the need for our graduates to be socially aware and able to contribute fully to the society. Another direction is the students’ social experiences during their studies, such as the effectiveness of student support. Through adequate support structures, students should be fully equipped to face the challenges of higher education - financial, psychological or practical (ESU, 2012).

Social dimension as a concept grasps a variety of issues which make up the student experience – access to education, effective participation and successful course completion, both studying and living conditions, student support in terms of guidance, financial support, participation of students in governance and student mobility.

Since 2001, when social dimension was introduced to the Bologna process, it is now considered to be an integral part of the European Higher Education Area. Furthermore, during the Leuven Communiqué (2009), a commitment was made to set measurable targets for widening the access and participation within education by 2020 (Eurydice Network, 2012). This shows how important the factor of social dimension has become within the European agenda.

In 2013, the European Council reached a conclusion regarding social dimension. It has been recognised that the best way to face the challenges of modern Europe, there needs to be more equality of access, participation and completion of higher education (Council of the European Union, 2013).

Adult Education, also referred to as Further Education or Lifelong Learning (preferred notion of European Higher Education Area) in particular, is one of the overarching themes of the Bologna Process. It first appeared on the Bologna process agenda in 2001, in the Prague Communiqué, where it was stated that lifelong learning is an essential element of the European Higher Education Area and strategies are necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness and the use of new technologies and to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life. Since then, at the following ministerial conferences, the messages regarding the importance of lifelong learning have continuously been reinforced.

The 1997 Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning defined adult education as the “entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society”. The same declaration summarizes the objectives of youth and adult education as: “to develop the autonomy and the sense of responsibility of people and communities, to reinforce the capacity to deal with the transformations taking place in the economy, in culture and in society as a whole, and to promote coexistence, tolerance and the informed and creative participation of citizens in their communities, in short to enable people and communities to take control of their destiny and society in order to face the challenges ahead”. Government of Ireland defines Adult Education in a more concise way as “systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training”.

The concept of quality in higher education has become an increasingly important matter for institutions. As the demand for higher education has increased, so has the demand for its accountability, reliability and value for money (Harvey and Askling, 2003). Institutions are responsible for the internal management of the quality and the effective establishment of procedures which monitor this. Nationally, quality assurance agencies exist, which provide an external evaluation of the institution and/or its programmes. From country to country the mechanisms can vary and how quality is achieved and monitored can be very different. However institutions now face much larger

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1115620>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1115620>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)