

Quality Assurance in an International Higher Education Area

A case-study approach and comparative
analysis of six national higher education
systems

(AUT, CAN, FIN, GER, UK, US)

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Outline

- Part I Introduction
- Part II Theoretical Part
- Part III Research Design
- Part IV Country Reports
- Part V Expert Interviews
- Part VI Comparison and Future Challenges

Part I Introduction

Research question:

What are the **further developments** of the respective higher education system and how will **quality assurance** emerge successfully an **international higher education area**?

Part II Theoretical Part

- 1 Higher Education Systems under Transformation
 - 1.1 The Evolution of Higher Education Systems
 - 1.2 The Concept of Massification
 - 1.3 The Concept of Diversification
 - 1.4 Privatisation of Higher Education
 - 1.5 Internationalisation of Higher Education

- 2 Quality Assurance in Higher Education
 - 2.1 Definitions of Quality and Quality Assurance
 - 2.2 Quality Assurance Systems and their Critics
 - 3.3 Quality Assurance in an International Perspective

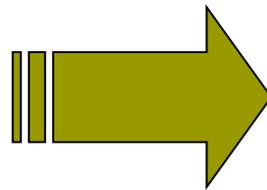
Part III Research Design

- **Case-study** approach
- **Expert interviews** – qualitative content analysis
- **Comparison** along the country reports and expert interviews (*the theoretical framework*)
- **Recommendations** and future challenges

Part IV Country Reports

Country reports

- Austria
- Finland
- Germany
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Canada



**Peer review
process**

Content

- Facts & Figures
- Higher Education Reforms
- Governance and Funding
- Quality Assurance

Part V Expert Interviews

- personal information
- feedback on the respective country report
- main challenges in terms of QA in HE (national or internationally)
- future developments and trends in the field of QA in HE
- **Return rate** out of 154 (223) sent questionnaires:
 - Questionnaires 37 (24 %)
 - Policy papers/articles 19 (12 %)
 - in total 56 (36,6 %)
 - Feedback 33 (24,4 %) (out of 135)

Comparison at four levels:

- a) *International*
- b) *Descriptive*
- c) *Discursive*
- d) *Analytical*
 - (1) *Massification*
 - (2) *Diversification*
 - (3) *Privatisation*
 - (4) *Internationalisation*

Recommendations

A) International perspectives

- complexity of cross-border education
- trust and transparency (*degree mills*)
- shift towards institutional approaches
- involvement of all stakeholders
- increased importance of the labour market

...to go beyond bureaucracy and establish a vivid quality culture!

B) Country reports

- a very complex picture on multiple approaches
- European countries: shift towards institutional audits/reviews of internal QA procedures
- Historical perspective:
 - U.S.: longest history in QA (accreditation)
 - followed by the UK: strong focus on research evaluation and accountability procedures
 - FIN, GER and AUT: more comprehensive QA procedures not within the last decades
 - Canada: different approaches in their provinces (strong emphasis on accreditation)

...great efforts to implement their individual QA system along with their economic, social and cultural setting!

C) National Perspectives

Future transformation processes

AUT: establishment of a single QAA (consultation process in 2009)

GER: shift towards system accreditation next to programme accreditation in 2007

FIN: shift towards audit procedures (completed by 2011)

UK: a shift towards *Research Excellence Framework* (after RAE 2008)

U.S.: new system of *Accreditation 2.0* (recommended in 2006)

CAN: *Ministerial Statement on QA of Degree Education in Canada* (2007)

QA in the international HE area

- importance of internationalisation
- growing need of comparability, mobility, cooperation and transparency within and through QA in HE

...QA as an essential asset to operate at international level!

Recommendations

1. A balance between *over-diversification* and *over-homogenisation*
2. Increased comparability and transparency
3. More orientation towards the different perspectives of stakeholders
4. Support of the international dimension of QA

...to establish a functioning QA system to compete within an international HE area!

...though...

...not one single approved solution of a QAS

...national peculiarities vs. international challenges

Many thanks for your attention!



Time for questions now or via e-mail: andrea.bernhard@uni-graz.at

- ❑ How can co-operation between the observed countries in higher education be strengthened?
- ❑ Is internationalisation a hindering/supporting factor to assure quality in higher education?
- ❑ What are the similarities and differences between the European countries and the U.S. as well as Canada in terms of their quality assurance system?
- ❑ What are the future developments in terms of quality assurance in the observed countries or in your home-country?