

# **Bureaucracy: the enemy of a quality culture**

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# Context – The Bologna Process

- Commitments at Bergen have placed the quality agenda centre stage
- Higher education institutions must develop a common understanding on how best to achieve verifiable internal & external processes of quality assurance
- The challenge is to “transform” into organisations that are ‘fit for purpose’ i.e. assuring the employability of graduates and furthering the knowledge economy throughout Europe

# Can we embed a Quality Culture?

Argument -

*“the bureaucratic structure (the professional bureaucracy) commonly found in many higher education institutions is an organisational form unsuited to embedding a quality culture”*

# Weber's 'Machine' Bureaucracy

- Based on legal-rational authority in a specific hierarchy
- Specialisation & top-down decision making
- Formal sets of rules and regulations
- Rigid, inflexible recruitment and promotion procedures
- Strict lines of demarcation between roles

# Mintzberg's *Professional Bureaucracy*

- Variation on organisational form found in universities and colleges
- Survives through process of 'pigeonholing' of academics into specific roles based on their knowledge, skills and training
- Authority based on **knowledge & expertise**
- High levels of **autonomy & self-regulation** among academics
- **Professional standards** replacing external rules, controls & top-down authority

# Professional bureaucracy *capable* of embedding a quality culture?

- Quality as ‘fit for purpose’; the extent to which the institution is ‘capable’ of achieving its stated or implied mission
- Quality as ‘value for money’: accountability to stakeholders, producing more graduates with less resources
- Quality as ‘transforming’; process whereby student’s perceptions of the world are ‘transformed’ through learning (Source; Harvey and Green, 1993)

# Embedding a quality culture

- Lessons learned from the manufacturing sector prove the value of a ‘total quality management’ (TQM) approach
- TQM is based on ‘shared’ responsibility for quality
- System dependent on *individual* efforts contributing to assigned *collective* responsibility; a quality ‘chain’ where one broken link results in system failure

# Embedding TQM in higher education; critical success factors;

- Structure
- Culture
- Leadership
- Staff development



# Supporting TQM; Structures

- Power and responsibility need to be dispersed throughout the organisation
- Develop small cohesive units that foster interdependence, collaboration and imply co-ordination of activities
- Use academic specialist skills within these smaller 'learning organisations' and use the 'autonomy' to advantage of the organisation
- **Adhocracy** based on the principle of 'mutual adjustment'

# Supporting TQM; Culture

- 'The collection of relatively uniform and enduring values, beliefs, customs, traditions and practices that are shared by organisation members, learned by new recruits and transmitted from one generation to another'
- Culture must support the 'adhocracy'; rooted in creativity and innovation
- Requires a paradigm shift from the bureaucratic culture to the 'entrepreneurial/adaptable culture'

(Buchanan & Huczynski, 2004, p.643)

# Supporting TQM; Leadership

- ***Transformational-*** engaging followers through inspiration, exemplary practice, collaboration, spontaneity and trust' (Ramsden, 2002, p.66)
- **Dependent on:-**
  - Vision, strategy and planning
  - Enabling academic people
  - Recognising/developing performance
  - Learning to lead

# Supporting TQM; Staff Development

- Resistance to change endemic in the professional bureaucracy
- Individual resistance rooted in habit, need for security, fear of the unknown and myopia
- Staff development facilitates change by unlocking the creativity and innovation of an organisation
- Autonomy amongst 'developed' academics can result in self-direction toward the achievement of goals that they value

# Summary

- “there is no blueprint solution.....culture, tradition, environment and diverse demands of stakeholders and societies at large have a strong impact on individual institutions. Any general recipe for improvement and change can only be as good as its purposeful application in its specific context”

Source; Hofmann, Dr. Stefanie. 2005. 10 years on: lessons learned from The Institutional Evaluation Programme s