Embedding Quality Culture in Higher Education Provision: The Cyprus case

Elpida Keravnou-Papailiou

President of the Governing Board of

Cyprus University of Technology

Presentation

- **European and Global Developments**
- **Higher Education in Cyprus**
- **Internal Quality Management as a Strategic Goal for Self-Awareness**
- **Learner-Centered Education Provision**
- **The Quality Scene for HE in Cyprus**
  - **Developing CUT's internal quality culture**
- **Conclusions**

European and Global Developments

- **Bologna process**
  - Succeeded in setting into motion major reforms in the HE systems of Europe
    - Harmonization of HE systems
    - Keeping and strengthening diversity

  - Output-based learner-centered education philosophy

  - Has put quality issues centrally on the European agenda
    - ESG
    - European Quality Assurance Register
    - European Quality Assurance Forum

European and Global Developments

- High pressure to increase HE capacity
  - Knowledge-based societies and economies
  - Social dimension of HE
    - Increase access, attendance and successful completion of HE studies from underrepresented groups

European and Global Developments

- Globalization
- Transnational education provision
- Joint degrees
- Higher competition for international students
- Changes in demographics
- Reductions in traditional students
- The perceived enlargement of adult learners
- Flexible learning pathways
- The call to universities to become more inclusive and responsive
  - Become LLL universities

Such developments are welcome …

- Provided that quality is not adversely affected
- Thus, the management of quality should be a strategic priority for HEIs
- Countries should also safeguard against the commercialization of HE and the easy acquisition of qualifications
  - Such developments do not differ substantially from degree mills
    - An ever growing and thriving business

Higher Education in Cyprus

- Relatively short history
- Three state universities
  - University of Cyprus (1989, 1992)
  - Open University of Cyprus (2003, 2006)
  - Cyprus University of Technology (2003, 2007)
- Three private universities (2005, 2007)
  - Currently operating under probationary license
- Cyprus signed the Bologna Declaration in 2001

Bologna Process Scorecard 2009 for Cyprus

DEGREE SYSTEM

1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

2. Access to the next cycle

3. Implementation of national qualifications framework

QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG

4. Stage of development of external QA system

5. Level of student participation in quality assurance

6. Level of international participation in QA

RECOGNITION

7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement

8. National implementation of the principles of the LRC

9. Stage of implementation of ECTS

10. Recognition of prior learning

Some facts and figures for Cyprus

- According to the official report on the progress of the Lisbon strategy
  - Amongst the 27 member states, Cyprus has the highest percentage (29.7%) of population in the age group 25-64 with HE qualifications
  - Cyprus, Malta and Ireland are the three member states with the highest progress in the period 2000-2007, regarding the percentage of their population with HE qualifications
    - This is a central progress indicator
- Cyprus has a high student migration
  - More than half of its approximately 35,000 students are studying at universities abroad
  - Government policy aims to reverse this situation and in addition to attract international students
    - Convert Cyprus to a regional centre for quality HE

Current Developments in Cyprus

- Establishment of a Cyprus QA and Accreditation Agency
  - Legislation underway
- Dialogue in progress regarding the establishment of a new, unified and modernized legislation for HE
- An NQF for Cyprus in line with the QF for the EHEA and the EQF for LLL is under development

Future Challenges for Cyprus

- Implementation of the HE reform process
- Extending the HE capacity to satisfy the demand for university studies
- Increasing research activities
  - Increasing the involvement of the private sector
- Establishing centers of excellence to compete internationally
- Improving the attractiveness of HE by improving the quality of HE
- Making the HE system student-centered
- Enhancing student/staff mobility
- Introducing flexibility in studies and establishing LLL centers at all HEIs

Internal Quality Management as a Strategic Goal for Self-Awareness

- University rankings and league tables are quite fashionable these days, causing varied impressions
  - Criticized, both methodologically and otherwise
  - Invariably compute a score for each institution based on a weighted sum of the chosen numerical indicators
    - A complex situation is reduced to a single number
    - Is such an abstraction justifiable?
  - Rankings can serve a useful purpose, provided that
    - They aim to compare comparable entities
    - Do not distract HEIs from their missions
    - Do not cause adverse external effects

European Economic and Social Committee – Transparent field of play and quality assessment

"European rankings should be the result of in-depth evaluation procedure by selected experts and should, besides "citations", embrace education and teaching quality, research, innovation, connections, "mapping" of specializations, interdisciplinary competences, institutional links between universities and independent research institutions, and also logistic student services. There is a need for multidimensional European assessment methods to assess university delivery."

Quality in HE

- Multi-dimensional
- Its internal management should be a strategic goal of a HEI
  - Enhance self-awareness as to how well the HEI meets its mission
    - What needs to be improved and how
- To create appropriate internal quality culture, QA mechanisms must be incorporated in a seamless fashion
  - Fundamental and integral aspects of processes they evaluate

High level conception of education provision and the conducting of research

Interactivity with the surrounding social environment

"input" → Process (education/research) → "output"

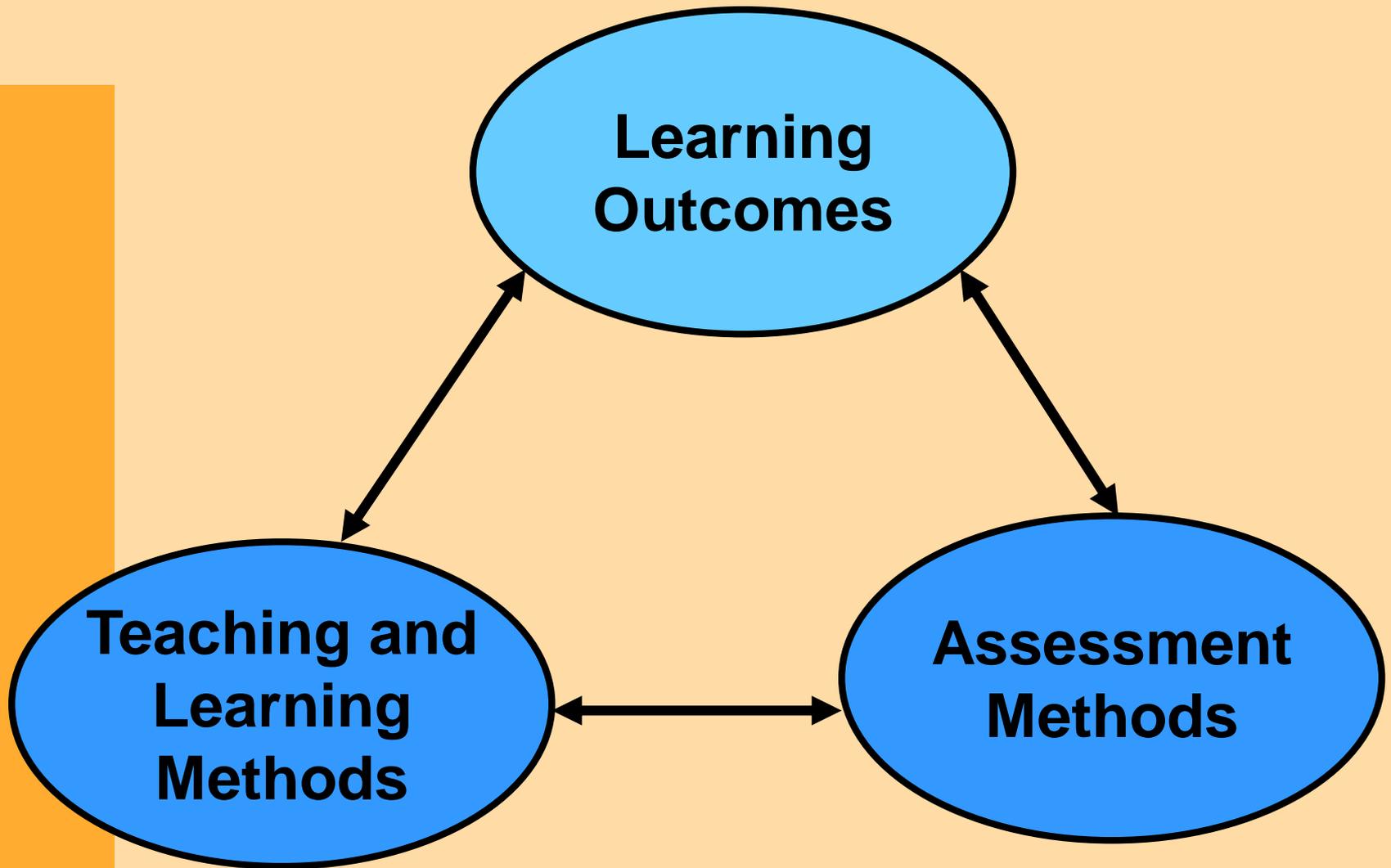students
resources

achieved learning
research results
societal impact

SOCIETY

Continuous Enhancement of Quality through a Repetitive Process of Objective Self-awareness and Improvement

Quality data

Self awareness

(diagnosis of problems and weaknesses)

Improvement
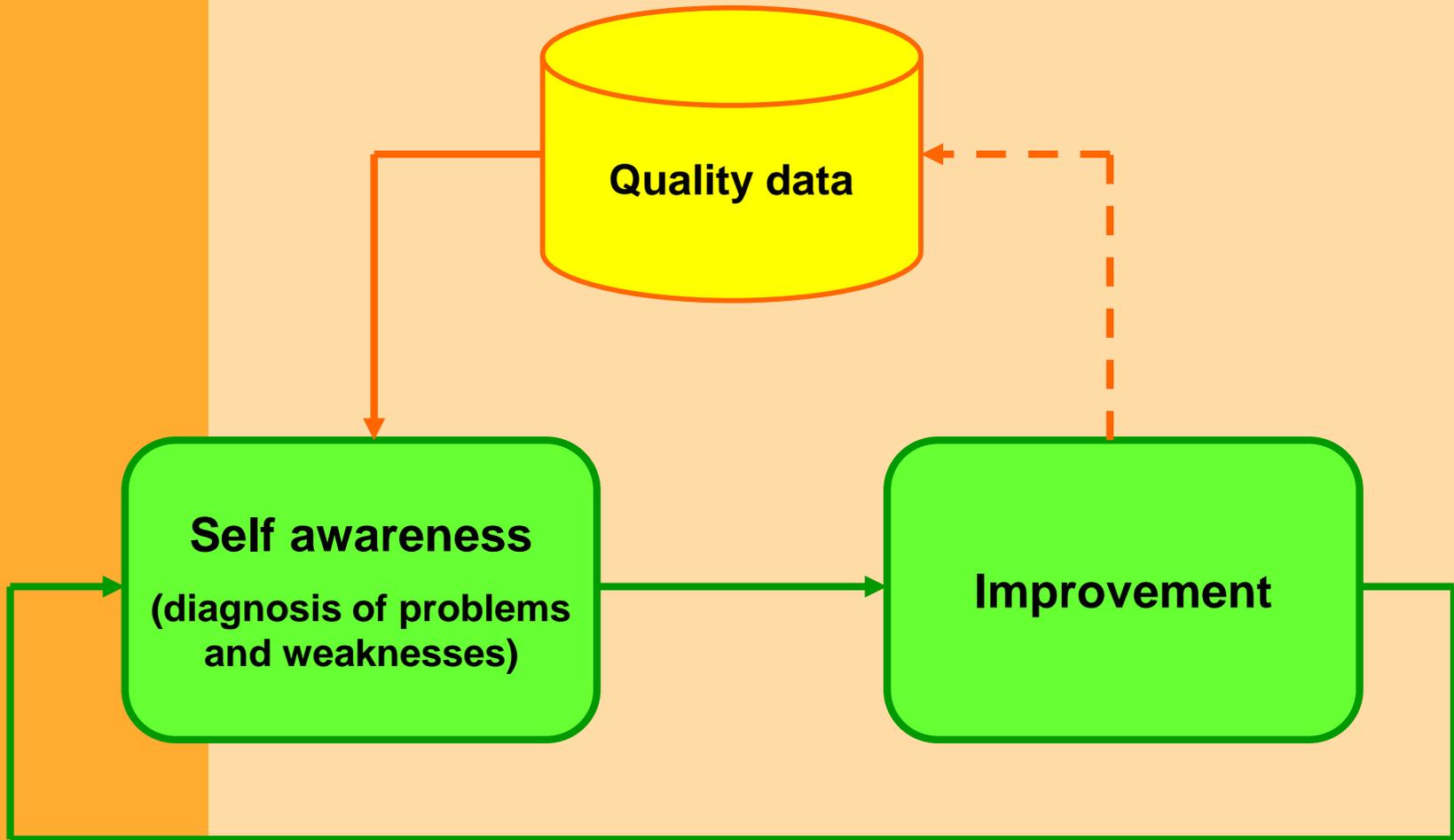
Learner-Centered Education Provision

- Learning outcomes for individual modules and for a programme of study as a whole
  - Statements about what knowledge, skills and competencies a learner is expected to acquire/grasp at the end of a learning process
  - The question put to a graduate is no longer "What have you done to obtain the qualification" but, "Now that you have obtained the qualification, what can you do?"

- Teaching and Learning Methods
  - Appropriate, adequate learning resources

- Assessment Methods
  - Continuous assessment
  - Different types of assessment (learner feedback, evaluation)
  - Appropriate, applied consistently and transparently

Student populations

- Becoming more diverse
  - Flexibility in learning
  - Different learning pathways

- Meeting the goal of social cohesion
  - Students with diverse backgrounds to have an equal opportunity in successfully completing their studies
    - HEI to give them the necessary learning and other support

- Meeting the goal of a sustainable knowledge-based society and economy
  - Adult learners, a significant proportion of student populations

A comprehensive internal quality management strategy for educational programmes

- Should aim to examine all dimensions of a learner-centered educational system

- Should encompass the dimensions relating to the diversity of student populations

HE provision is a complex multi-dimensional process

As such its quality management is an equally complex process dealing with a number of both qualitative and quantitative indicators

The Quality Scene for HE in Cyprus

- All HEIs in Cyprus are strongly encouraged to develop and apply effective internal quality management strategies

- Legislation is under way for the establishment of a national QA and Accreditation Agency
    - Encompasses ESG
    - Covers transnational education provision

Private Universities

- External quality control of their education provision is particularly extensive

  - Operate under probation for four years
  - Operate for profit

- The quality of their programmes is a key criterion for granting them proper license of operation

  - Special emphasis is put on the implementation of the ECTS requirements

Criteria/Indicators for the Quality Management of Programmes of Private Universities in Cyprus

1. Aims, objectives and overall identity of programme
2. Student intake
3. Admissions criteria and admissions process
4. Target audience (home and international students)
5. Structure of programme
6. Learning outcomes (overall programme, individual modules)
7. Practical/industrial component (if applicable)
8. Project work (dissertations, group work, theses)
9. Implementation of ECTS requirements
10. Generic skills and competencies that the programme aims to give to the students
11. Research-related aspects of programme
12. Internal mechanisms for evaluating the quality of the programme and the student and staff satisfaction, and the adequateness of these mechanisms
13. Internal procedures for reviewing the programme
14. Relation of programme with other programmes of the university
15. Impact of the programme (societal, scientific)
16. Learning Resources supporting the Programme

Potential Indicators for 1st Cycle Programmes

1. Student intake (student preferences, problems faced by students from special categories)
2. Support/integration mechanisms for new students, particularly those from special categories
3. Functioning of the institutions of academic tutors and teaching assistants
4. Demand vs supply of free elective courses
5. Retention and failure rates for programme and its course modules
6. Employment of graduates (locally, abroad, in jobs relevant or not to their studies)
7. Graduates following further studies (same university, other university of Cyprus, abroad, in an area relevant to their undergraduate studies or in a different area)

Potential Indicators for 2nd Cycle Programmes

1. Criteria for deciding student intake
2. Student intake (satisfaction of admission criteria, quality of 1st degree, knowledge of languages, industrial or other experience, number of applications, percentage of applicants who accepted the offer)
3. Percentage of working students
4. Percentage of international students
5. Percentage of students who obtained their 1st degree from the same university
6. Specialization aspects of the programme and how they are catered for
7. Thesis supervision
8. Utilization of qualification for further studies or employment

Potential Indicators for 3rd Cycle Programmes

1. Student intake (quality of admission qualifications, applicants with top grades, number of applications, percentage of applicants who accepted the offer)
2. Percentage of working students
3. Percentage of international students
4. Percentage of students who obtained their admission qualifications from the same university
5. Percentage of students admitted directly from their 1st degree
6. Thesis supervision
7. Student progress monitoring mechanisms
8. Transferrable skills
9. Award and failure rates
10. Utilization of doctoral qualification for academic/research/other employment

Developing CUT's internal quality culture

- CUT was established by law in December 2003.

- It admitted its first students in September 2007 and now it has a population of about 1400 students (2009/10)

- It is a new, public and independent University of Cyprus

CUT's Vision and Mission

- To become a modern , highly innovative and creative, lifelong learning university offering high quality education at all three Bologna cycles

- Pursuing cutting edge research in leading scientific and technological fields and to have major impact on economic, technical and scientific sectors


20 April 2010

Quality at CUT

- Opportunity to be quality conscious from its early stages of development

- Quality is not a top-level decision but a bottom-up approach (Strategic development plan)

- Gradually emerge through largely voluntary initiatives with the support of leadership

- Quality assurance procedures in line with the University's procedures, to avoid overheads and promote:
  - quality culture
  - continuous improvement and
  - quality enhancement

Internal evaluation procedures

Current voluntary initiatives at CUT can be framed according to the European Standards for Quality Assurance (Bergen, May 2005) proposed by the E4 Group and are based on 3 axes.

Administration services

Education provision

Research
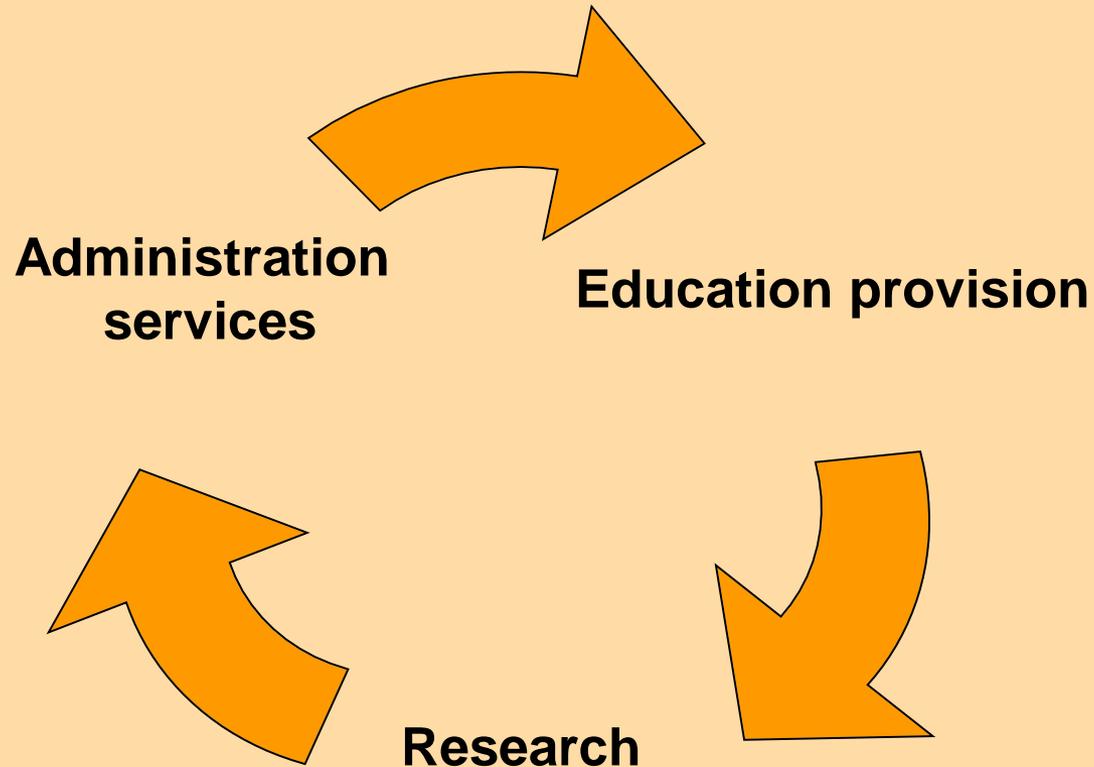
Education provision – Internal Evaluation procedures

- Committees of international experts for Academic faculty recruitment, design of curricula and setting up of new academic departments

- Implementation of evaluation system from external accredited scientific committee (Department of Agricultural Sciences, Biotechnology and Food Sciences)

- Formation of Quality Assurance Committee (Department of Civil Engineering and Geoinformatics)

- Peer Reviews, Annual Reviews, Self Evaluations, Students Evaluations, Knowledge enhancement for teachers, Evaluation of Teaching methods, learning material and learning media (Language Center)

- Use of technology and innovative teaching methods (e.g. e-notes)

- Student Course and Teacher evaluation in all Academic Departments

Administration Services – Internal Evaluation procedures

- Documentation of procedures implemented by all Administration Departments, Department Manuals (Finance and Human Resources Department)

- Key Performance indicators for each Department and measurable criteria (Finance and Human Resources Department)

- Staff training on Quality Assurance (Finance and Human Resources Department)

- Operation of Internal Audit Department

- Annual Staff Satisfaction Survey (Finance and Human Resources Department)

- Participation in the Total Quality Unit for Academic Libraries (Library)

- Feedback from students - satisfaction survey for the level of services of the Student Affairs Department, automatically process of questionnaires (Student Affairs Department)

- Progress reports (Student Affairs Department, Library)

Research –
Internal Evaluation procedures

- Publications (reviewed journals – international)
- Publications in top journals (impact factor)
- PhD's supervised
- Externally funded projects
- External partners (internationalization)
- Degree of funding
- Private-Public Partnerships (commercialized products)
- Number of researchers employed in projects – number of new job vacancies for projects
- Participation in National and International/European Organizations and Networks
- Number of bi-lateral agreements with other universities

EUA: QA must allow space for risk taking

- QA processes must allow space for risk taking and failure
  - Institutions identify and rectify failures
- QA is context-sensitive
  - Take account of different disciplines, cultures and national contexts
- QA should be inclusive
  - Engage the whole university community
- Successful partnership between agencies and institutions
  - Leave space for 'trust and self-reflection'
- Sharing QA 'experiences'
  - Dialogue at all levels (departments, institutions, EU level)
  - Not only for copying good practices, but also for stimulating critical analysis
- QA processes must support institutions' capacity to change and to reach strategic goals
- Agencies and institutions must engage all key actors in QA processes

Conclusions

- Embedding quality culture is necessary for safeguarding against minimum quality standards for academic and professional qualifications

- Quality with respect to HE provision is multi-dimensional

- A comprehensive internal quality management strategy should aim to analyze and address all dimensions

  – Focusing on the resources supporting the learning process, and the

  – Diversity of student population, which is likely to increase in order to meet the goals of social cohesion and a sustainable knowledge-based society and economy