

## THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRODUCING HIGH-QUALITY WORKFORCE

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### Abstract

The development of quality culture in higher education is relatively new, and it is becoming an increasingly significant issue. It indisputably fulfills a crucial role in the assessment of competitiveness; therefore, quality improvement activities in this field are expected to intensify in the future.

The economic significance of this issue is also growing as higher education sphere has a major effect on the processes of the labour market. In certain areas currently the problem seems to be the lack of labour, in other areas the disappearance of professions. Considering the situation from another point of view, significant resources need to be spent on the reintegration of job-seekers into the labour market. This might be promoted by the rationalization of the education system, the improvement of education quality, and it is also necessary to develop a high level of commitment towards it.

It is crucial for higher education institutions to adapt their education structure and curriculum to the demands of the labour market as much as possible.

This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of quality management in higher education, define its role and significance, as well as the responsibility of higher education institutions to implement quality assurance in order to produce high-quality workforce. The characteristics of quality culture in higher education, as well as the most widespread and most generally applied quality assurance and quality evaluation methods are also going to be presented.

**Keywords:** higher education, quality, student, workforce, labour market

### Introduction

One of the four fundamental benefits of the European Union is the free movement of workforce. As a precondition all institutions where qualified workforce graduates from should apply analogous educational and rating systems.

In the first decade of the 21st century a major higher education reform was launched in Europe. The transformation is unprecedented in extent and complexity, affects the entire continent and almost all fields of the higher education institutional system (Bazsa, 2014).

The primary motive of this effort is to preserve and increase Europe's economic competitiveness; and one of its key factors is highly qualified workforce and their successful employment, in addition to giving high priority to science, research and development (Derényi, 2016). Hungarian higher education has to accommodate to

this process, and the transformation and development of the Hungarian institutional system must comply with this.

In 1999, 29 countries came together in Bologna and decided to voluntarily adjust their higher education policy and harmonize their higher education structures in the first decade of the next millennium.

The Bologna Process was implemented in Europe in order to achieve the objectives of the Bologna Declaration. The basic objectives of the process have not changed over the years. Since 2010 the harmonizing and modernizing process in higher education of 48 participating countries has been called the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which implies the results already achieved.

In Prague (2001) the ministers emphasized lifelong learning, aimed to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA and the importance of involving students and institutions in the Bologna Process. At the conference the ministers strongly encouraged the countries to determine the profile of their bachelor programmes: "Programmes leading to a degree may, and indeed should, have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs."

The communiqué of ministers at the Berlin Ministerial Conference (2003) puts it this way:

*"The quality of higher education has proven to be at the heart of the setting up of a European Higher Education Area. [...] consistent with the principle of institutional autonomy, the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework."*

## **Material and methods**

The topic will be presented by employing an empirical approach, which comprises a review of relevant literature and the monitoring and processing of experience gained through observing the accreditation processes of Hungarian higher education institutions and the analysis of the related documents.

## **Research results**

### ***The development of the internal quality culture of institutions***

Bologna Process opened a new dimension for quality in higher education putting it in an international context. Cooperation and comparability became basic requirements, while competition was increasing. Mutual trust between nations in the quality of each other's higher education activities became a vital question. It ensures one of the main objectives of the Bologna process, smooth student mobility.

The competition for students is becoming increasingly international, and greater stress is placed on the quality of education and student services than before.

What most characterizes the economic and social integration of higher education is that after the boom in the number of students higher education is transforming from

the academic role into being an economic operator, a vital part of the economy. At the same time, the question of quality and quality assurance are coming to the fore.

As for the internal quality assurance and quality management practice of institutions, it is apparent that in Hungarian higher education institutions quality is present to quite different extents. The usual practice for the introduction and application of quality management systems is not unified, it mostly depends on the position, interests and traditions of the given higher education institution. Each Hungarian higher education institution has some sort of quality system or at least its elements, but their functioning, and especially the state of quality culture, can be considered immature. Formal quality assurance systems developed almost everywhere, but they hardly influence the areas of education and learning. Although quality-based mentality is present, quality itself is not a vital part of everyday life (Bazsa, 2014).

Quality assurance efforts of higher education institutions are from time to time evaluated by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee in accordance with its procedures, which meet the requirements of the European Higher Education Area. Some institutions submit themselves not only to the accreditation but also to further quality certification processes in order to prove their competitive potential in the international market. These institutions realized that they have to put themselves to the test in the European Area; it is no longer sufficient to be in a good position in the national higher education market.

One possible classification of quality assurance evaluation procedures in higher education is presented on Figure 1.

Figure 1. Classification of higher education evaluation procedures

Focus of the procedure	Aim of the procedure		
	rating/certification	classification	development
Specific core activity (input processes, efficiency, output)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme accreditation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• international rankings</li> <li>• QS-star</li> <li>• Research university process</li> <li>• Professional prize</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EUA-IEP</li> <li>• Student surveys on teacher performance</li> <li>• benchmarking</li> <li>• indicator systems</li> <li>• EFQM</li> </ul>
System (targeting, tracking and review processes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institution accreditation (according to the ESG)</li> <li>• Quality management system according to the ISO 9001 standard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence measuring</li> <li>• Quality prizes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• audit</li> </ul>

Source: own editing

Institutions dedicated to quality expect customers not only from Hungary, but also from Europe and beyond, from any part of the world. In order to achieve this, they

need to acquire recognition, gain the confidence of the customers towards the higher education service they provide and towards the labour market value of the obtainable qualification.

A quality certificate is both a market tool and an opportunity for any institution. Conscious customers choose quality, and are willing to invest time and money in it.

There are many options available for institutions to satisfy this demand, the most common and widely acknowledged international quality improvement and evaluation methods are discussed in the following section.

### **International quality improvement and evaluation methods**

#### ***European Universities Association - Institutional Evaluation Program (EUA IEP)***

The mission of the institutional evaluation program, in accordance with the institutional autonomy, is to support higher education institutions in developing their strategic management system and change management abilities through their participation in a voluntary institutional evaluation program.

The program was launched by EUA in 1994 with the aim of supporting higher education institutions in the quality assessment of their own activities and in fulfilling their obligation of its continuous development. Since then the IEP carried out more than 400 institutional evaluations (and subsequent evaluations) in 45 countries (mostly in Europe, but also in Latin America, Asia and Africa).

In the recent years the institutional evaluation program (IEP) of the EUA is acting, based on its geographic scope as an international, and based on its field of activity, as a specific, independent higher education quality assurance agency, and as such, the ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) is a full member of and registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

#### *The EUA IEP*

- It is an overall evaluation that extends to all activity / operational fields of the institution, including institutional management, government, decision making, education, training, research, quality culture, services provided for society and internationalization.
- The basis of the evaluation is self-evaluation carried out according to the EUA IEP criteria, that helps institutions to get a more thorough understanding of their own procedures and at the same time points out the fields that are going to be in the focus of the on-site evaluation visits.
- As a result of the evaluation, the institution may use the “*Evaluated by IEP*” logo for five years (Figure 2.)

Figure 2. "Evaluated by IEP" logo



Source: <http://www.iep-qaq.org/>

***EFQM „committed to excellence” international certificate***

The EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) launched its new recognition system in 2002, in order to engage more institutions at various levels of institutional excellence maturity in self-evaluation based on the EFQM Excellence Model; and allow them to apply, be evaluated, and advance on the excellence levels. The recognition system has three levels (Figure 3.):

- Committed to Excellence
- Recognized for Excellence – 3\*, 4\* and 5\*
- European Excellence Award (EEA).

Figure 3.: EFQM Recognition Levels



Source: [www.efqm.org](http://www.efqm.org)

### ***Committed to Excellence – European recognition***

“Committed to Excellence” is the entry level of the EFQM recognition system; it is an evaluation and certification form that helps the organization achieve better results of operation.

Applying for this level is recommended for organizations that consider development and the pursuit of excellence as important factors. The method aims to support organizations in correctly recognizing their achievement level and specify the priorities of the development accordingly.

Commitment to Excellence recognition takes place in two phases:

- In the first phase applicants have to carry out a self-evaluation based on the 9 main criteria of the Excellence Model. This is a “screening”-like self-evaluation that supports the development of the organization, and based on its result the organization establishes strengths and areas to be developed. Then, systematically ranking the areas to be developed, it prepares a development plan.
- In the second phase the organization has to present and prove during an on-site visit that it has launched projects according to the development plan.

Among the Hungarian higher education institutions only the University of Szeged has this certificate; it was obtained in November 2016.

### **International higher education rankings**

International higher education rankings are mostly prepared by the weighting of previously defined indicators. They belong to the group of quality evaluations carried out with the aim of classification (see Figure 1.). These are mostly made for the media, students and policy-makers, at the same time a higher (or rising) position in the ranking can serve as an indicator of the achievement of the university. A certain position in the ranking does not depend only on the educational, research and other achievements of the university, but also on whether they manage to make these achievements apparent, and also support and verify them by relevant data.

Nowadays there are many existing international rankings and the number is growing; therefore, universities need to consider carefully which international ranking(s) are suitable for them.

### ***Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Ranking***

Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) is a British company that publishes the international ranking of the world’s top higher education institutions annually since 2004. In 2016-2017, 3800 higher education institutions were assessed from all over the world, 916 of which (from 81 countries) feature in the University Ranking.

The first 400 institutions are ranked individually, while the remaining institutions in groups. Institutions can apply for the ranking procedure or they can be selected by invitation.

The results are presented in an interactive chart that can be filtered by region/location and by the six ranking indicators the QS methodology is based on.

The QS University Ranking takes into consideration the following six factors (ranking indicators) when determining the ranking of higher education institutions:

- Academic reputation (weighting 40%). It is based on a global academic survey. In 2016-2017 a total of 74,651 professors participated in the survey.
- Employer reputation (weighting 10%). Assessment, evaluation and reputation of the institution by employers of students who graduated from the university. It is based on the global Employer Survey. Employer Reputation is a unique indicator in the higher education rankings. In 2016-2017 a total of 37,781 employers participated in the survey.
- Faculty/Student Ratio (weighting 20%). It highlights factors that are important from the perspective of education/training quality, such as group size and providing individual support.
- Citations per faculty (weighting 20%). Citations and number of academic works taken from the Elsevier Scopus database. In the 2016-2017 ranking procedure QS analyzed 10.3 million research works (papers, studies etc.) and 66.3 million citations
- International faculty ratio (weighting 5%).
- International student ratio (weighting 5%).

Based on these six ranking indicators the QS ranking evaluates the achievement of the university in four areas: research, education/training, employability/employment and international mentality, internationalization.

Besides the general ranking QS also prepares Rankings by Subject, i.e. it ranks the world's universities according to discipline. To feature in a discipline ranking, an institution has to fulfill the following conditions: it has to be indicated at least 20 times in the academic/employer survey procedure; the number of publications has to be above a five-year threshold (it varies according to discipline), and the institution has to offer bachelor and postgraduate programmes in the given discipline.

QS Institution and Subject Rankings are popular all over the world among higher education institutions (as well), including ones from Hungary.

### ***U-Multirank***

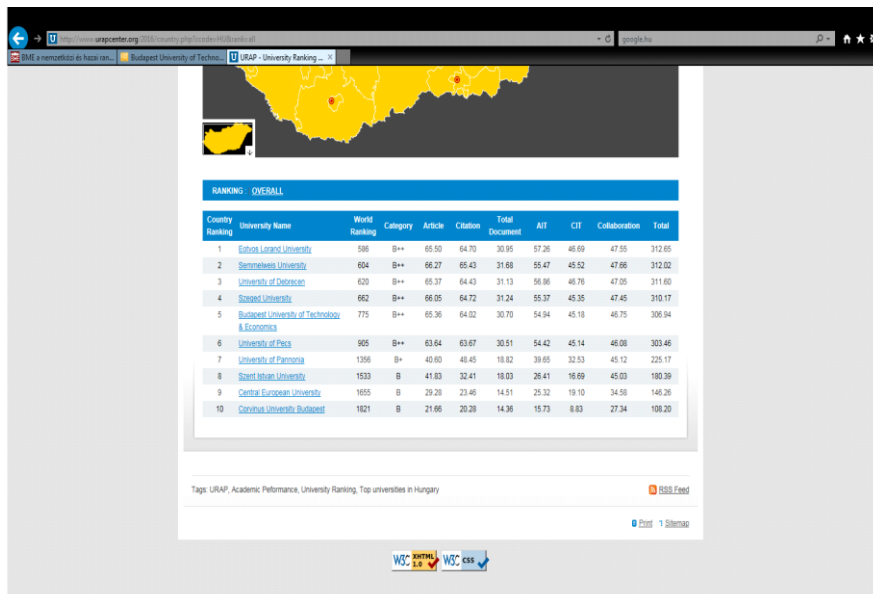
U-Multirank represents a different approach; instead of preparing an extensive list (i.e. an ultimate ranking list of universities based on the weighting of indicators) universities with the same profile are identified and compared, with an aim to present institutional diversity and increase transparency. Besides, it shows the

capacity of the given university for facilitating growth and increasing employability much better than other rankings. It provides vital and precious information for policy-makers, students and for institutions themselves as well.

U-Multirank is a new, multi-dimensional ranking; it was launched on 13 May 2014, and is commanded by users and by those concerned. While other international higher education rankings mostly concentrate on research results, U-Multirank is more comprehensive: it takes more factors into consideration and prepares the list of the world's higher education institutions (universities, colleges) based on five key areas. These five areas are research results, the standard of education and training, internationalization, knowledge transfer (with partner companies and start-ups) and regional embedding. Besides, the opinion of higher education students is taken into consideration (in the process in 2017-2018 that of 100 000 students).

U-Multirank is an independent ranking; its development and initial functioning was and is still supported and financed by the European Committee. The basis of U-Multirank is a carefully built database, it is mainly used for comparative analysis, at the same time different rankings are prepared. This new, original tool makes comparison of achievements possible, and it provides information, *about 1500 higher education institutions, 3250 departments and 10 700 programmes* from more than 90 countries.

Figure 4.: The current U-Multirank ranking of Hungarian higher education institutions



Source: <https://www.umultirank.org/#!/home?name=null&trackType=home>

U-Multirank is actually a flexible online tool that provides data about institutions in the five dimensions above. The achievement of the higher education institution is assessed in each dimension (field), by taking into consideration a total of 30



different indicators. Based on this, the achievement of the institution is classified by indicators on a five-grade scale, where 'A' stands for excellent and 'E' for poor performance. The online tool assesses on one hand the general performance of universities; on the other hand, it also makes rankings according to the chosen academic fields. The current U-Multirank ranking of Hungarian higher education institutions is presented on Figure 4.

## Conclusions

The decision of students, the primary customers of higher education institutions, is increasingly characterized by consciousness; they choose an institution or a department that will provide them with the necessary qualification that will help them make their way in the labour market.

However, another group of students chooses an institution to lay the foundations for their academic life, where they feel assured about their academic advancement, so they choose QUALITY.

The quality factors offered by institutions are going to be the fundamentals based on which these customers make their decisions. Therefore, higher education institutions need to continuously keep up with the development processes on the international higher education market, and in order to make the customers aware of that, they have to have the parameters that can gain them a prominent place in quality rankings; or they need to obtain at least one recognition of excellence. The possession of a quality certificate, a trade mark will definitely make a good impression on customers, and positively contribute to their decisions.

Higher education institutions will need to concentrate on the prioritization of quality parameters in the future, and need to commit themselves to meet higher and higher standards in the satisfaction of customer (student) demands.

The slogan of the future is: „building on the similarities and benefiting from the differences between cultures, languages and national systems, and drawing on all possibilities of intergovernmental cooperation and the ongoing dialogue with European universities and other higher education institutions and student organisations as well as the Community programmes.” (Prague Declaration, 2001)

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## **A FELSŐOKTATÁS SZEREPE ÉS FELELŐSSÉGE A KIVÁLÓ MINŐSÉGŰ MUNKAERŐ KÉPZÉSÉBEN**

**Mikáczó Andrea- Herczeg Boglárka**

A minőségbiztosítási kultúra fejlesztése a felsőoktatásban viszonylag új, és egyre fontosabb kérdéssé válik. Vitathatatlanul fontos szerepe van a versenyképesség megítélésében; ezért ezen a területen a minőségjavító tevékenységek a jövőben intenzívebbé válnak.

A kérdés gazdasági jelentősége is növekszik, mivel a felsőoktatási szféra jelentős hatást gyakorol a munkaerőpiac folyamataira. Bizonyos területeken jelenleg a legfőbb probléma a munkaerő hiánya, más területeken a szakmák eltűnése. A helyzetet más szempontból megvilágítva jelentős erőforrásokat kell fordítani az álláskeresők munkaerő-piaci beilleszkedésére. Ezt elősegítheti az oktatási rendszer racionalizálása, az oktatási minőség javítása, valamint az ezek iránti nagyfokú elkötelezettség kialakítására is szükség van.

Kulcsfontosságú, hogy a felsőoktatási intézmények a lehető legnagyobb mértékben hozzáigazítsák oktatási struktúrájukat és tanterveiket a munkaerőpiac igényeihez.

A tanulmány célja, hogy hozzájáruljon a felsőoktatás minőségmenedzsmentjének jobb megértéséhez, meghatározza annak szerepét és jelentőségét, valamint a felsőoktatási intézmények felelősségét a minőségbiztosítás bevezetésében és megvalósításában annak érdekében, hogy magas minőségű munkaerőt képezzenek. A minőségi kultúra jellemzői a felsőoktatásban, valamint a legelterjedtebb és leginkább alkalmazott minőségbiztosítási és minőségértékelési módszerek is bemutatásra kerülnek.