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## INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF FRENCH UNIVERSITIES

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Болонський процес, який розпочав численні структурні реформи в європейських вищих навчальних закладах, також спричинив значні зміни в національній системі забезпечення якості вищої освіти Франції. Стаття присвячена розвитку внутрішньої та зовнішньої систем забезпечення якості у Франції та визначенню їх сильних та слабких сторін. У статті автор також здійснює аналіз діяльності агенцій, що забезпечують контроль та оцінювання якості освіти у Франції, а саме: Національного комітету з оцінки державних наукових, культурних та професійних установ, Агентства з оцінки наукових досліджень та вищої освіти, Вищої ради з оцінки наукових досліджень та вищої освіти, в компетенцію яких входить контроль за діяльністю університетів, науково-дослідницьких підрозділів, освітніх програм та ступенів.

**Ключові слова:** *забезпечення якості, вища освіта, внутрішнє забезпечення якості, зовнішнє забезпечення якості.*

Болонский процесс, который начал многочисленные структурные реформы в европейских высших учебных заведениях, также вызвал значительные изменения в национальной системе обеспечения качества высшего образования Франции. Статья посвящена развитию внутренней и внешней систем обеспечения качества во Франции и определению их сильных и слабых сторон. В статье автор также осуществляет анализ деятельности агентств, обеспечивающих контроль и оценку качества образования во Франции, а именно: Национального комитета по оценке государственных научных, культурных и профессиональных учреждений, Агентства по оценке научных исследований и высшего образования, Высшего совета по оценке научных исследований и высшего образования, в компетенцию которых входит контроль за деятельностью университетов, научно-исследовательских подразделений, образовательных программ и степеней.

**Ключевые слова:** *обеспечение качества, высшее образование, внутреннее обеспечение качества, внешнее обеспечение качества.*

Silivanova I.M. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF FRENCH UNIVERSITIES

Bologna process, which launched numerous structural reforms in higher education in France, also induced significant quality assurance changes in its higher education institutions. The French educational quality assurance system has undergone many different transformations over the last decade.

The article analyses the evolution of the internal and external evaluation and institutions in charge of evaluating (The National Committee for the evaluation of public institutions of a scientific, cultural and professional nature; The Evaluation Agency for Research and Higher Education; The High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education) in France over the last few decades. The author provides a detailed look of the internal and external quality assurance identifying their strengths and weaknesses.

Considering the debates about internal and external quality control, it is evident that both government and higher education institutions recognize importance of these assessments. Internal and external evaluations have their varied uses. On the one hand, external evaluation continues to be the key means of quality assurance in France as it is the main source of independent evaluation of institutions, research units, higher education programs and degrees. On the other hand, internal evaluation carried out by the educational institution is implemented with the intention to teach universities not to conceal their shortcomings, but to promote their elimination by recognition.

**Key words:** *quality assurance, higher education, internal quality assurance, external quality assurance.*

**Problem statement.** In the context of the continued growth and diversification of higher education systems, the European Union countries are concerned about the independent quality control in higher education. In the recent years the advantages and disadvantages of the internal and external evaluation of higher education institutions is one of the key issues among the OECD member countries. France is no exception to other EU countries

started to implement changes to quality assurance procedures since the launch of the Bologna process in 1999 [6, p. 31].

**Analysis of recent research works and publications.** The French educational quality assurance system has undergone many different transformations over the last decade. The development and continuous improvement of quality assurance system has attracted attention of different French and



international researchers. While academics Marie-Françoise Fave-Bonnet and Kathia E. Serrano-Velarde concentrated their efforts on the development of assessment system in European universities, French researchers Jean Yves Merindol, Thierry Chevaillier, Jean-Luc Petitjean, Jean-François Ory, Thierry Côme and Saeed Paivandi analyzed history and policy of the evaluation in French higher education. Several national reports on the topic of quality assurance and Handbook of Standards for Quality Management in French Higher Education Institutions were also published over the last few years.

**The aim of the article.** Evaluation is an indispensable component of the education process. But today there is some disharmony in the use of internal and external evaluation in French universities. The main objective of the article is to analyse the evolution of the internal and external evaluation and agencies in charge of evaluating in France over the last few decades.

**Presentation of the core material.** The French Government began efforts to assure the quality of education (mainly external evaluation) with the creation of The National Committee for the evaluation of public institutions of scientific, cultural or professional nature (CNE) in 1984. The Committee reported directly to the President of France, produced public reports, but this evaluation was disconnected from the process of budget allocation by the Ministry [1, p.133]. Between 1986 and 2000 the National Committee for the evaluation assessed all French universities and about thirty schools. Since 2000, the CNE organized its evaluations in accordance with a schedule harmonized with a contractualisation plan of the Ministry of Higher Education. The National Evaluation Committee had an international character and a proven European dimension, on the one hand, by the presence of foreign experts in evaluation committees and, on the other hand, by its active participation in European cooperation, notably by its involvement in ENQA (The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) [3, p. 6].

In compliance with the Bologna declaration, in 2002 the government of France introduced the new university diploma structure, and consequently, in 2006-2007 adopted two laws, namely the Act on research and the Act on the Liberties and Responsibilities of the University with the aim to implement standards and recommendations for quality assurance in higher education. In order to achieve high standards in education in 2006 the decision was made to replace The National Committee for the evaluation with The Evaluation Agency for Research and Higher Education (AERES)

[6, p. 31]. The AERES responsibilities were broadened and combined the functions of the National Committee for the Evaluation, the National Center for Scientific Research and The Scientific, Technical, Pedagogical Mission [3, p. 11]. So, AERES became in charge of the external evaluation of the institutions (with the exception of medical and technological institutes), research units, course programs and degrees as well as validation of the assessment process for the scientific and teaching staff. As a result, the evaluation reports were made accessible on the AERES website and their indicators were now the major criterion in the resource allocation formula for the universities. By its judgment the AERES could block or stimulate financing as well as signature of the quadrennial contract between the university and the state. In consequence, it has become much more important for universities to monitor their activities and publications, to calculate the number of grants received and better analyse the level of skills and qualifications needed for students to enter the labour market [1, p.134].

According to Monica Roxana Macarie-Florea, research fellow at the University of Paris, the replacement of the National Committee was due to the need to substitute the formative assessment by the summative. The National Committee for the evaluation saw its main task in providing guidance on university development strategies, while The Evaluation Agency for Research and Higher Education was created to measure the performance of universities [5, p. 270]. The criteria used by the AERES for the external university evaluation were now the number of science papers published, the number of defended dissertations and the number of students. However, the AERES did not pass judgment about duration of the existence of research unit or its academic progress [6, p. 36].

The launch of internal quality assessment in French universities can be traced back to 1996. First, the institutions were demanded to carry out evaluation of study programs by means of student surveys and afterwards to assess their strengths and weaknesses and develop strategic plans for the next 4 years [1, p.132]. In order to help universities to succeed in their internal evaluation processes, the National Committee for the evaluation published Reference book with the guidelines in 2003. As it was foreseen by the National Committee for the evaluation, self-evaluation report was meant to develop the assessment culture within the institutions, its presidential team and services; to form and expand the internal understanding of the institution; to use the strategic results for the improve-



ment across the institution [5, p. 5]. Despite the fact that self-evaluation was introduced on the request of the CNE, only with the help of the AERES experts it was proven to be not an end in itself, but a means to become more efficient.

From the point of view of French researcher Victoria Kis, the main drawback of internal evaluation is that universities are not interested in a comprehensive analysis of their problems as it can negatively affect their funding and image. On the contrary, external evaluation in the case of inadequately used criteria may not stimulate, but rather hinder the development of university. In addition, external evaluation involves substantial expenditure, which is not always justified, especially if the evaluation is carried out at the government's expense [2, p. 14]. We can assume that ideally these two methods should complement each other, however, according to the Russian scientist Herbert Kels, today in France we can observe the shift from evaluation based on the principles of centralization to the process of self-assessment, directly related to the educational institution [10, c. 24].

The High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (HCERES) became the successor to the AERES in 2013. The evaluation method adopted by the HCERES is based on a self-evaluation work carried out by the university and on an external, independent, collegial and transparent evaluation conducted by experts. The newly created Council promotes objectivity, fairness and transparency in monitoring, carries out a more detailed analysis of the university courses based not only on the university self-assessment report, but assessment made by students [4, p. 12].

Between 2010 and 2015 both the AERES and the HCERES went through changes in the methodology applied. In 2010 the frequency of evaluation was changed from every 4 to every 5 years. One year later the self-evaluation guide was published and the overall grade was replaced by a multi-criteria grade. In 2012 institutional evaluation standards were reviewed and the number of files requested from the institution assessed was lessened. In the following years the system of scores was eliminated and the standards for evaluation of territorial coordination strategies were published [7, p. 26].

Taking into account the progressive grouping of the universities into the territorial sites (university associations and consortia), the HCERES implemented external quality assurance procedure to assess various components that make up a site. Since 2015 there are two different methods that can be used to evaluate the site in question after consulting

with its stakeholders: either "a bottom-up approach" or "a top-down approach". In case of "a bottom-up approach" application, the evaluation of research units (step 1) as well as programmes and degrees (step 2) are taken into account for the evaluation of institutions (step 3). The results from all three previous steps are then used in the site policy evaluation (step 4). If the evaluation is performed in "a top-down approach", site policy evaluation (step 1) influences the evaluation of research units, programmes, degrees (step 2 and 3) and feeds into the evaluation of institutions (step 4) [7, p. 19].

The website of The High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education also updated recommendations for the University self-assessment. The recommendations state that self-assessment report may be free in form on condition that the plan and content reflect the activity results of the educational institution. A self-evaluation report should not exceed 60 pages and provide an objective assessment of the university activities. The introduction should include the description of environment in which university carries out its activities and its history. Development strategy and explanation of how self-assessment report helped to identify the development directions should be presented in the conclusion [4, p. 9; 8, p. 9]. It is also expected that in 2016-2020 accreditation of curricula, research units and universities by the French Ministry of Higher Education will take place every five years immediately after HCERES assessment of the universities.

Self-assessment by the university of its activities, which is the latest trend in higher education, is intended to teach universities not to conceal their shortcomings, but to promote their elimination by recognition. The executive director of The Australian Universities Quality Agency David Woodhouse, disagrees with the idea that government funding for the university should depend on how successful its activities are. An additional allocation of a successful university would mean that the state pays more for the institution that is already highly ranked, while the university with low academic achievement remains underfunded. Therefore, if the funding does not depend on high-quality results, universities will not need to falsify their self-assessment reports [2, p. 22].

According to Czech researcher Hana Zupanová, self- and external evaluations can be combined to ensure quality in higher education. Self-assessment prepares university management for external assessment, which gives an overall impression and can be used to confirm that university acts in compliance



with the educational policy of the state. Internal evaluation gives the possibility to express the core of a problem, internal relations and follow long-term development. However, during both internal and external evaluations, the evaluators might face a problem of not being objective in the choice of methods and forms, measures and evaluation criteria. Internal evaluation in any case cannot replace external evaluation or vice versa [9, p. 38].

**Conclusion.** Considering the debates about internal and external quality control, it is evident that both government and higher education institutions recognize usefulness of these assessments. There are strengths and weaknesses to both external and internal evaluations. External evaluation continues to be the key means of quality assurance in France as it is the main source of independent evaluation of institutions, research units, higher education programs and degrees as well as criterion for contractualisation process between the public authority and the university. The external evaluation results influence the government budget allocation for the educational institutions and they are always made public to show the institution's progress and provide some recommendations. As for the internal evaluation, quality assurance agencies should foster universities to implement the guidelines and standards for effective quality assurance, encourage them to enhance their statistical and analytical capacity and thus increase their visibility.

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