



Enhancement and control: How do we get higher education institutions to take full ownership of assuring quality?

Orientation to the theme

Underlying assumption that HEIs do not take full ownership of assuring quality – is that the case?

1. HEIs are not coherent actors

- Consist of various sub-groups and actors with different agendas and decision-making responsibility
 - Steered by different working and governance logics
- *“full ownership” can mean different things to different groups*

2. HEIs do not operate in a vacuum

- Embedded in an ambiguous and challenging environment
 - Must relate to public authorities, interest groups, etc. and society at large
 - Different contexts and national framework conditions
- *different starting points for HEIs to assume “full ownership”*



Is it possible for HEIs to conceive full ownership?

- Underlying principle: HEIs work closest around higher educations' primary processes (teaching, learning, research and third mission) => should therefore have greatest responsibility for QA
 - BUT: cannot be left completely to the institutions because of the importance of higher education for society
- *«full ownership» for institutions is an ideal that is unlikely in practice*



How can we work towards the concept of «full ownership» in a constructive way?

- Hierarchical governance relationship: public authorities ↔ HEIs
- Primary governance tools to stimulate change: **funding** and **regulations**
- Possible scenario: increase capacity for those who work with QA + define areas of responsibility
- Important: balance capacity and new areas of responsibility



Underlying values that define «full ownership»

- Most important concepts: **institutional autonomy** + responsibility, accountability and trust
- **Institutional autonomy:** «*Institutional autonomy typically refers to the ability of higher education institutions to set and implement their own policies and priorities for teaching, research and their third mission.*»
- As public authority it is important to define appropriate degrees of responsibility, accountability and trust
- BUT: different degrees usually imply some kind of trade-off (e.g., more accountability = less trust)



Summary

(1)

- Different starting points for higher education institutions when it comes to their rights and possibilities in assuring quality, depending on the national framework conditions and their institutional status.
- Embedded in a pluralistic environment with different actors and different agendas

(2)

- Any discussion around “full ownership of assuring QA for HEIs” naturally revolves around definitions of **institutional autonomy** and its related values responsibility, accountability and trust

(3)

- **Funding** and **regulations** as the most powerful governance tools for public authorities. Important to balance both tools with each other for effective change



Literature suggestions

- Bleiklie, I., & Michelsen, S. (2013). Comparing HE policies in Europe: Structures and reform outputs in eight countries. *Higher Education*, 65(1), 113–133.
- Bovens, M. (2007). Analysing and assessing accountability: A conceptual framework. *European Law Journal*, 13(4), 447–468.
- Fukuyama, F. (2013). What is governance? *Governance*, 26(3), 347–368.
- Krüger, K., Parellada, M., Samoilovich, D., & Sursock, A. (2018). *Governance reforms in European university systems: The case of Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands and Portugal*. Springer International
- Maassen, P., Gornitzka, A., & Fumasoli, T. (2017). University reform and institutional autonomy: A framework for analysing the living autonomy. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 71(3), 239–250.
- Olsen, J. P., & Maassen, P. (2007). European debates on the knowledge institution: The modernization of the university at the European level. In P. Maassen & J. P. Olsen (Eds.), *University dynamics and European integration* (pp. 3–22). Springer Netherlands.
- Wu, X., Ramesh, M., & Howlett, M. (2015). Policy capacity: A conceptual framework for understanding policy competences and capabilities. *Policy and Society*, 34(3–4), 165–171.