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Title   Ten Rules to ruin your quality management
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Abstract

The effectiveness of quality management and other quality based activities in higher education institutions are subject of a growing number of studies in the field of higher education research (e.g. Harvey/Williams 2010; Leiber et al. 2015). Despite the efforts that have been undertaken so far to investigate this topic, there is still no clear answer about the question under which conditions which activities are leading to an effective quality management. However, the answer of this question is essential for practitioners as well as researchers. But there is now clear evidence about keys of success. Therefore our paper narrows the problem from a different angle. We provide ten rules which are essential to make quality management a failure, which at the same time underlines their importance without implying that the mentioned factors are "determinants" of effectiveness. Our suggested paper is based on a mixed methods research project (funded by the German ministry of Education and Research) which has analyzed the effects of internal quality assurance in teaching and learning at higher education institutions.

Outline

Quality management has spread around the world during the last decades. Rising from the sector of industrial production, it spread its wings to the sphere of higher education nearly four decades ago (Harvey/Williams 2010; Beck/Walgenbach 2005). Particularly the higher education sector in Germany is rather late in the implementation of these approaches and may in general be considered as a latecomer in New Public Management (Schimank 2005). However, during the last ten years significant progress has been made. With this upcoming quality movement in tertiary education more and more actors came into play. Additionally the interest is growing to understand what makes an effective quality management work and how does quality management impact research as well as teaching and learning?

Although promising conceptual efforts are already existent (Leiber 2016; Leiber/Stensaker/Harvey 2015; Stensaker/Leiber 2015), until now empirical evidence on the effects and the effectiveness of quality management is still underdeveloped or missing. There are two reasons for this lack of evidence. On the one hand quality is a rather new phenomenon and empirical results about its impact on studies and learning is still not available. On the other hand it is difficult to separate the effects or to analyse their interactions. Especially considering the vast number of conditions and characteristics of Universities which may or may not influence the effects of quality management. If these problems of causal attribution are considered as given, this may influence future research on the effectiveness of quality management more difficult.

Until now it is impossible to determine what really works to establish an effective quality management. Even after conducting a four year research project about the effects of quality management and after receiving a lot of insights, which factors may inhibit or promote quality management, we cannot definitely say what the mechanisms are that make quality management work. In contrast, what we can say is, what are the factors and preconditions that will negatively influence the effects of quality management. Or to put it more bluntly:

what are the preconditions that should be met in order to "ruin" the quality management system?

Based on the results of our research project "WIQU: Research on Impact of quality management in higher education - procedural, structural and personnel causes and consequences of quality assurance facilities" and referring to quantitative and qualitative Data gathered in a mixed methods approach, we formulate the following ten rules that may definitely ruin the quality management efforts in each higher education institution:

1. **Ignore academic freedom**

   Academic freedom is overrated and is an obstacle which must be overcome for true and effective quality management.

2. **All hail to bureaucracy**

   Quality management should eradicate all doubts and vagueness or ambiguity about processes, rules, duties and responsibilities. Formalization is the heart of everything.

3. **Control as much as possible**

   Don not trust your stakeholders and above all do not trust academics. Control them as much as possible and make sure that they fuflill their formal duties..

4. **Reduce communication**

   Communication and coordnation with different stakeholders is just a waste of time and resources. Avoid external influences at any costs.

5. **Transform universities into Weberian bureucracies**

   There is nothing special about universities. Hence, you can treat them as all the other public or private organizations on the planet.

6. **Evaluate anything and always.**

   More is always better. More evaluation means more data and more control. Particularly you should try to measure things that are not measureable.

7. **Define quality hierarchically**

   You know best what quality means. Do not care about other worldviews and perceptions about quality. There is a reason to be named a "quality-manager".

8. **Nothing beats a good benchmark**

   Benchmarking and Rankings are the true purpose of quality management processes and they help you to differentiate between "good" and "bad".

9. **Ignore resistance**

   Academic resistance is just a last gasp of people protecting their privileges. Ignore it.

10. **Ignore structures and staff qualifications**

    Do not care about how quality management is organized and about staff's qualifications. Structures and qualifications are irrelevant footnotes to your work.

Despite the difficulty of formulating simple criteria for the success and effectiveness of quality management, we think this negative list of rules to ruin quality management provides valuable insights for practitioners and researchers to identify relevant fields of action in order to improve quality management systems. And as intended by the abstract, there is no guarantee that actions in opposite directions in the above mentioned fields will create great successes, but there is at least a high probability that quality management will fail if practitioners will follow these rules.

References

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