Quality Through Student Eyes

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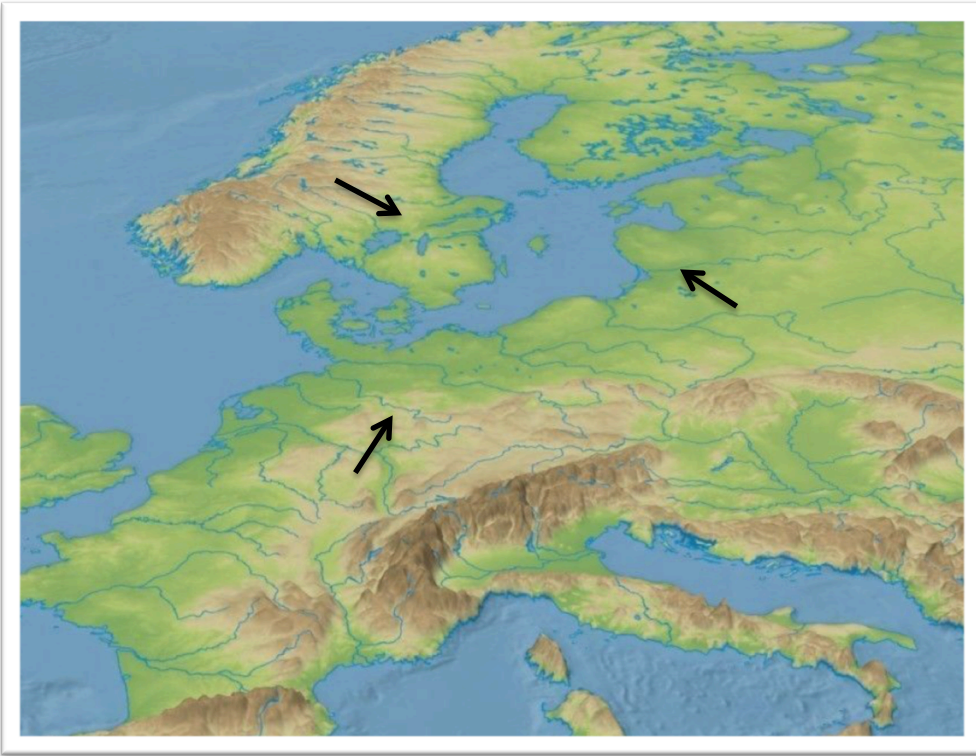28.11.2018

Outline

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1a WHO AM I?

- PhD student, **know both sides** (student and teacher, representative and responsible)

- 4½ years in Germany, 4½ years in Sweden, **2 completely different systems** (conservative vs. innovative, established QA vs. QA in development)

1b HOW DO COUNTRIES COMPARE?

- Thuringia: 2.2mio. – very rural, Erfurt 200T – 4 universities, 9 universities of applied sciences, **Lithuania: 2.8mio. – Vilnius ca. 0.8mio (greater area, >¼) – 23 universities, 23 colleges of higher education**, Sweden: 10mio. – Stockholm 2.5mio. (greater area, ¼) + 3mio. Skåne & Göteborg – 17 universities, 32 "högskolan"

2a Quality in Studies and Teaching

- **Quality:** meeting **expectations**, measure whether they are met

- **Student needs:** increase skills, knowledge, and ultimately **employability**

- **Expectations:** information, binding syllabi, achieve **learning outcomes**

  - **Implications: management** (planning, organization, didactics, …)

2a Quality in Studies and Teaching

- **Expectations:** information, binding syllabi, achieve **learning outcomes**

  - **information:** ahead of time, unambiguous, reliable, easy to access

  - **syllabi:** unambiguous, reliable, complete, fit-for-purpose

  - **achieving:** teaching methods, up-to-date content, learner's authonomy, support structures (feedback, tutorials, consulting, library, learning space, financial support / flexible schedules, …)

2b Challenges in Quality Assurance

- **Justification: coincidental** quality, content students, successful alumni, improving **reputation**, improving funding

- **QA Dogma: PLAN – DO – EVALUATE / MEASURE – ACT – REPEAT!**
  - programs, quality development, administration, mergers

- **The Bologna "Curse":** many **misconceptions** about what Bologna is

2c Challenges in Quality Assurance

- **The Bologna "Curse":** many **misconceptions** about what Bologna is

- **What it is:**

  - Diploma Supplement
  - ECTS System
  - Degree Structure (Ba, Ma, PhD)
  - National Qualification Frameworks
  - Quality Assurance

- **What it isn't:**

  - micro-managing HE
  - taking away academic freedom
  - purely formalities
  - a lot of extra work
  - a placebo

- **Transparency**, **Accountability**, **Transferability** = **Student expect.**

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2d Challenges in Quality Assurance

- **Slim, Flexible, Adaptive:** approach needs to be **fit for purpose**, unfit processes generate friction (e.g. inflated reporting, arbitrary rules)

- **Minimum Standards: common base** to operate from (e.g. ESG)

- **Stakeholder Involvement:** nobody is an expert on everything, need to involve **ALL** stakeholder groups, careful with happiness as indicator

  - **Independent External Reviews:** need to avoid **"institutional blindness"**, transfer of experiences and best practices

2e Challenges in Quality Assurance

- **Student-centered learning:** ideal of a university, **necessity for the 21st century information society** and job market

- **Teaching as cooperative effort:** learner **AND** teacher **share responsibility** for successful outcome, learner's autonomy

- **Social dimension:** education is a **key to social mobility** yet financial capacities are a great predictor of study success

  - **eLearning:** may increase access to education, promise to reduce costs, **flipped classroom**, experience the learning process…

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3a Experiences from a split department

- **B.Sc. Biology: split between two campuses** – central campus and medical campus with research institutes
  - **Professors:** few **cooperations**, few **interactions**, professors split into "teachers" and" researchers", de facto separation, little benefit for either side
  - **Study programs:** no **interactions**, no feeling of community, disconnected **representation**, little benefit for either side

  - **Actions: cooperation**, **interaction**, **representation**
    → organizational linkage (ambassadors), promote shared events (social and professional) and shared projects

3b Experiences from a shared program

- **M.Sc. Bioinformatics and System Biology: shared between two faculties** – the faculty of engineering and the faculty of biology, spatially separated, no other contact points
  - **Statistics course:** ambiguous **responsibilities** (often: 2 people in charge = 0 people in charge) → confusion, mutual accusation, organizational chaos, students feel lost
  - **Feeling disconnected:** small program, no **representation**, minority in shared lectures, no **interactions** outside our group

  - **Actions: responsibilities, representation, interactions** → fair and open communication across institutions and between administration, teachers, and students

3c Bad experiences from …

- **Several campuses in Dresden and Freiburg: spatial separation** – no access to teachers, no **interaction** of students or staff

- **FRIAS - Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies: a failed project** – **spatial proximity** is not enough, creating interaction needs **action**

3c Good experiences from …

- **SciLifeLab: common goals** – is a **brand**, shared research interest, strong ties, **interaction** promoted

- **Stockholm University: a growing university** – founded 1878, university in 1960, incorporated inter alia natural history museum and botanical garden, **federal university**, departments with own character

- **Department of Molecular Biosciences, The Wenner-Gren Institute: a fused department** – started 2013, complete in 2015, clear **leadership**, friendships across the departments, good **communication** between staff

3d Challenges in Merging Institutions

- **Merging units:** courses, programs, institutes, … student and staff will **compare** between "former institutions", different systems will collide

- **Merging QA systems:** possibly high **diversity of procedures**, unique chance to adapt processes, standardization vs. subsidiarity

- **Creating coherence:** e.g. within the student body (different subject, different learning cultures, etc. pp.), **involve people**, create shared new identity without erasing old ones

3e Challenges in Merging Institutions

- **Fit for purpose:** small institution vs. big one (also reflects on student representation), **bottom-up vs. top-down**

- **Student representation and self-governance:** should decide for themselves in the transition period, should be involved at every step (otherwise: resentment, no **identification with the new institution**)

- **Constant feedback:** constantly collect, analyze, and **use** information

THANK YOU!