Recent Trends in Quality Assurance

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a condensed analysis of trends in quality assurance. Recent literature shows a decline of trust in public institutions in general, and in higher education institutions in particular, as well as in professionals.

The loss of trust had consequences for quality assurance. Comparing state approval versus accreditation schemes, in the years 1998 and 2003, reveals an overwhelming movement towards accreditation schemes. Recent developments at EU level show that the Commission signed contracts to develop a classification system of universities (by adaptation of the Carnegie-Mellon system) and to create mechanisms for multidimensional ranking mechanisms of European universities.

The emergence of quality enhancement can be seen as an attempt of universities to regain trust by restating that quality is their major responsibility and that the role of outside agencies should be limited to quality audits. And the OECD (2009) is launching a feasibility study of the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) project based on students’ outcomes.