
Quality assurance is currently an established activity in Europe, driven either by national quality assurance agencies or by institutions themselves. However, whether quality assurance is perceived as actually being capable of promoting quality is still a question open to discussion. Based on three different views on quality derived from the literature – quality as culture, as compliance and as consistency – the current article sheds light on this issue by identifying the main obstacles to quality as perceived by Portuguese academics. The analysis reveals that academics tend to see those obstacles as essentially related to the view of quality as culture and especially with its structural component, including the design and functioning of institutional governance and management. Although this may indeed correspond to the Portuguese higher education institutions’ reality, one must not forget that academics tend to have a poor knowledge about the structural frames that are embedded in governance and management. By highlighting obstacles related to different views on quality, this study may serve as a base to the development of more effective quality assurance mechanisms.