

evalag (Evaluationsagentur Baden-Wuerttemberg) – External Quality Assurance as an approach of multiple procedures focusing on encouragement as well as control of quality in Higher Education Institutions

The interplay between internal and external quality assurance has been the cornerstone for the advancement of quality in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) since the establishment of Quality Assurance Agencies (QAA) more than two decades ago. In Germany the first decade during the 1990s was mainly characterized by the development of procedures and by an emphasis on control through external quality assurance procedures. Due to their public assignments by the government QAA had to execute external quality assurance in this way.

At that time higher education policy in Germany aimed at a changing relationship between HEI and the government. This policy was realized through regulations and incentives of increased self-government of HEI with in most cases still insufficient public funding. Increasing competition between HEI and internationalisation have enforced this changing relationship and still do. These changes have likewise affected the realm of quality assurance. The resolution of the Bologna Conference in Bergen (2005) that the HEI have the main responsibility for the quality of their services earmarked this.

The history and organisational development of **evalag** was during the first years after its establishment in 2000 in accordance with this more control-oriented policy. **evalag** was established as a foundation under public law by the federal state of Baden-Wuerttemberg. Since higher education policy is mainly the responsibility of the federal states, the reason behind the foundation of **evalag** was the progress of quality assurance in higher education via an external assessment of weaknesses and strenghts of subjects. But this approach of external quality assurance was not really accepted by the HEI in Baden-Wuerttemberg and therefore, at last, not successfully.

A clash between the universities and the ministry in 2005 ended this period. In 2007 **evalag** started again as an independent agency with a broader scope of tasks (evaluation, quality management, science support). The higher education institutions of Baden-Wuerttemberg and the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts have not any more voting rights in the foundation council. As a centre of excellence for quality assurance and enhancement, **evalag** now has the duty and mission to support higher education institutions and other scientific institutions with their commitment for good quality in teaching and learning, research and services.

This function is since 2009 amended by the function of an accreditation agency. **evalag** now also executes programme and system accreditation procedures due to the regulations of the German Accreditation Council and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK).

With regard to its mission as a centre of excellence for quality assurance and enhancement **evalag** has meanwhile developed and successfully executes an approach which focuses on the encouragement and strengthening of HEI in Baden-Wuerttemberg in line with the general higher education policy of that federal state. This approach is realized (even in other federal states) with several procedures/modes and

a continuous exchange between the HEI, the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts and **evalag**. We think that we might be a model for further development.

It has to be mentioned that causal for this development (in Baden-Wuerttemberg) was the nation-wide situation of quality assurance at that time: In 2007 several external quality assurance procedures (for example, programme accreditation, evaluation) were successfully established in Germany. Nevertheless there was an imbalance between internal and external quality assurance in many HEI. Due to financial restrictions and personnel turnover the expertise of quality assurance in many HEI was not always as high as within many of the QAA. This led, of course, in many cases to assessment procedures with bad or insufficient results. And even in Baden-Wuerttemberg, a federal state with well-endowed universities, where several universities had invested into the introduction and development of quality assurance and management there was – due to the fore mentioned aspects – nearly no systematic or continuous basis of a broad institutional expertise of quality management.

Therefore, **evalag** started 2008 with voluntarily assessments (quality audits) which focused on a stock-taking of existing quality assurance mechanisms and resulted in recommendations how to systematically develop a quality management system. These procedures have initiated internal processes of change management and therefore support the establishment of quality management. Several HEI have undergone this procedure and applied then for system accreditation – the institutional accreditation procedure within the realm of teaching and learning.

The quality audits as well as other consulting services have shown that the initial situation of a HEI, its profile, strategic objectives and opportunities differ quite a lot. **evalag** therefore has adapted and differentiates its services and the audit- approach. The results are more sophisticated and differentiated services (for example workshops, seminars, in-house-events) which concern the development of quality management procedures (f.e. contract management, monitoring or evaluation schemes) or the creation of internal quality culture. The methodology of each type of service is regularly reflected with all stakeholders (experts, foundation council, HEI) and further developed as far as **evalag** is independent in its actions – this is only partly true for accreditation procedures.

evalag is persuaded that the interplay between internal and external quality assurance with regard to the advancement of quality can best be developed further through an regular exchange between the HEI, the ministry and **evalag** in order to adjust politics and the responsibility of HEI through quality assurance procedure which fits the given circumstances – for example more encouragement, strenghtening, assessment or control.

With regard to the further development of quality audits **evalag** is actually preparing a project together with ACQUIN which aims at combining consulting and assessment for the establishment of a comprehensive quality management through an institutional accreditation.

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