

# A Framework for Quality Literacy in Higher Education Learning and Teaching.

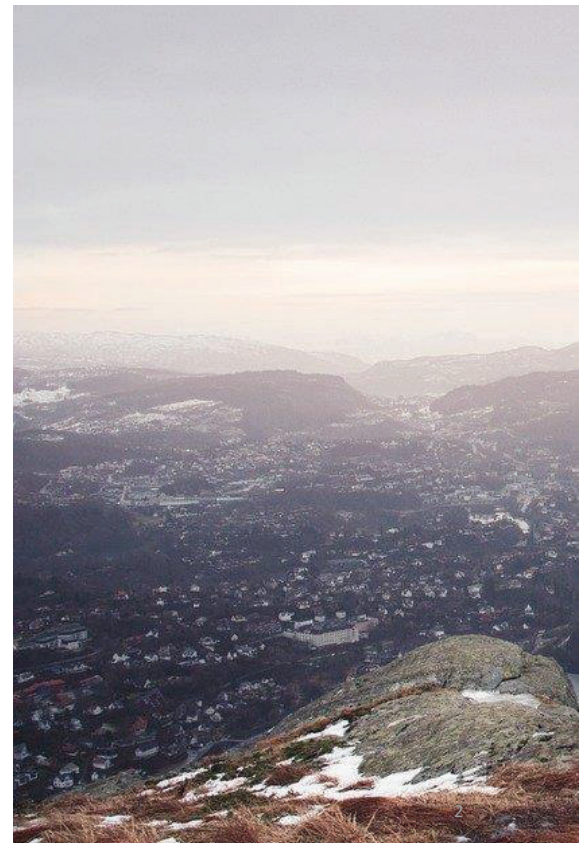
Quality Dimensions, Stakeholder Goals, Areas of Competencies and Related  
Performance Indicators

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## Overview

- Preliminary remark: problems of unclear concepts
- Controversial HE quality in persistence
- Definition of quality in HE
- Quality dimensions in L&T
- Analytical Framework of Quality Literacy (FQL)
- Summary and conclusions



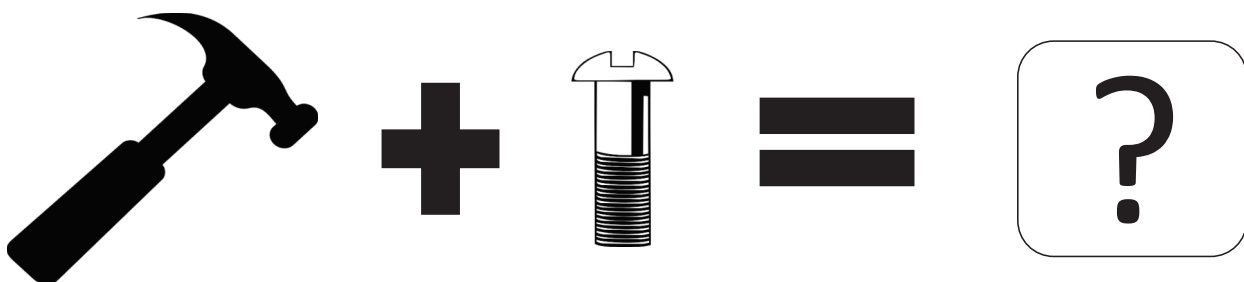
# Preliminary remark: problems of unclear concepts

If concepts are **inadequately defined** and/or **unclear**, it becomes at least **difficult** (or even irrational) to apply them in

- Descriptions
- Hypothesis building
- Explanations and predictions
- Ergo: **understanding**

**‘What the hell is quality?’**

(Ball, 1985)



## Controversial HE quality in persistence

**Lot of reflection, controversy and skepticism** about quality in HE  
(e.g., Cheng, 2017; Dicker *et al.*, 2019; Harvey, 2007; Harvey and Green, 1993; Hazekorn *et al.*, 2018)

**Various specific quality concepts** and related understandings are advocated  
(cf. e.g., Harvey and Green, 1993; Schindler *et al.*, 2015)

**No theoretical unification**, no conceptual coherence:  
Many circulating pseudo-definitions of quality in HE ‘are without any solid theoretical framework’ and ‘lack[s] any theoretical or conceptual gravitas’  
(Harvey and Newton, 2007, p. 232)

**Cognitive skepticism:**  
‘quality is a **slippery concept**’ (Harvey and Green, 1993, p. 10);  
‘Quality is [merely] a **buzzword** in higher education’ (Cheng, 2016, p. ix);  
**“Quality lies in the eyes of the beholder”**

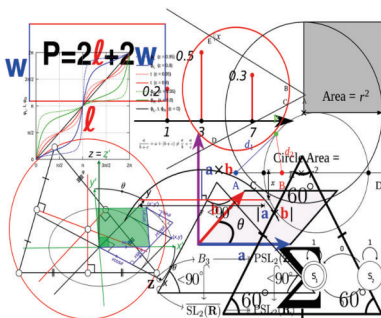
# Controversial HE quality in persistence

There is ‘**no easy way to clarify higher education quality**’ (Hazelkorn *et al.*, 2018)

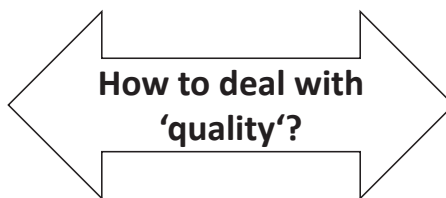
It is ‘a **perplexing picture**’ since ‘after decades of discussion involving many thousands of people from around the world, there seems no simple way of clarifying higher education **quality, performance and accountability, nor distinguishing [!?! Generating further confusion]** between these **elusive** yet **very important ideas**’ (Hazelkorn *et al.*, 2018)

This is ‘an **enormous problem of worldwide concern**. If quality is **ephemeral** and **subjective**, then really anything goes. If there is no agreement on the aspects of performance that matter most then inefficiencies can abound. If accountabilities are malleable and contestable, then the loudest or most powerful voices control the discourse’ (Hazelkorn *et al.*, 2018).

# Controversial HE quality in persistence

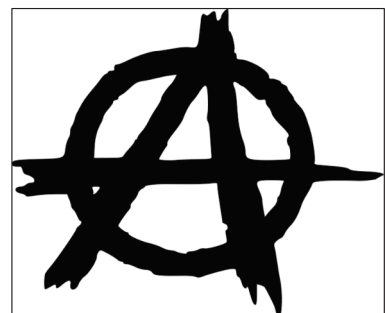


**Simple explicit definition of quality in higher education**



Dissatisfaction with the HE quality dispute

**Unified, transparent, empirically useful definition(s)**



**Several disparate and/or rudimentary definitions: 'Anything goes'**

# Definition of quality in HE

## How could an integrative conceptual framework of quality and quality literacy in HE L&T be conceived?

Quality derives from *qualitas* (Latin): **characteristic, property, composition or condition of an object, process or system**

*Qualitas* originates from *qualis* (Latin): **“of what kind something is”, “what something is made of”**

Basic notion of quality is used either in a neutral or in a judgmental way: the aggregate of all properties of an object, system or process; or the positively or negatively valued characteristics, properties, composition or condition of an object, system or process, e.g. good/high or bad/low etc. on gradual scales

If “quality” is used in a judgmental way, criteria or a framework of reference needs to be adopted

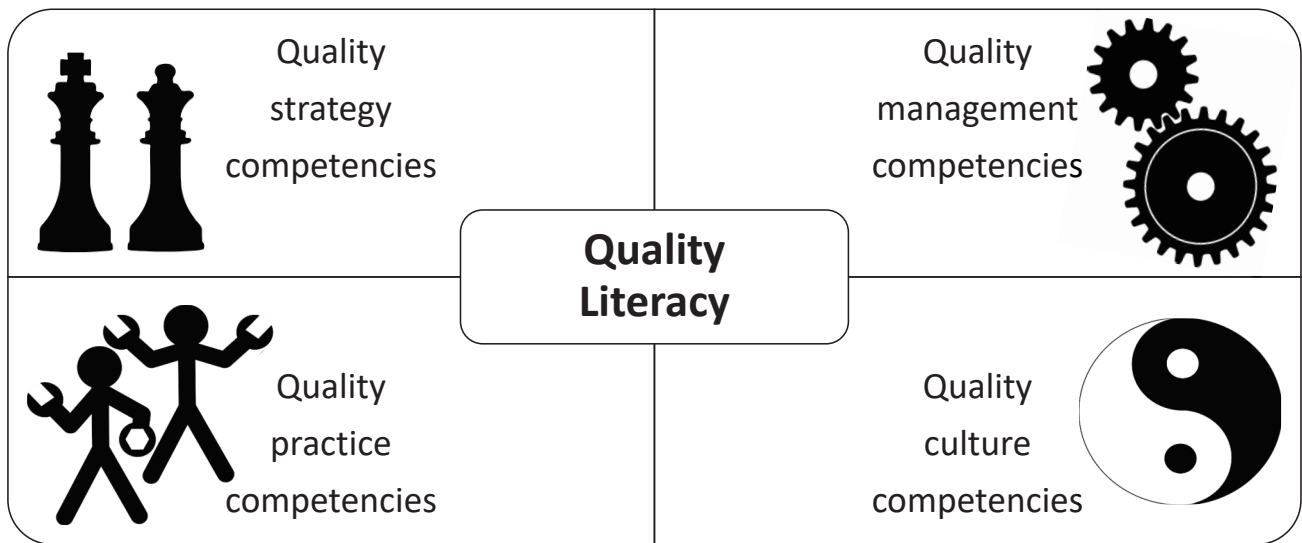
# Definition of quality in HE

Assessed/judgmental quality (also cf. QM standard DIN EN ISO 9000:2015-11 (ISO, 2015)) (intensional definition):

- **Degree to which** (sufficient and necessary) **characteristics, properties, compositions or conditions of an object, process or system meet certain adopted requirements**, for example required standards or criteria
- Gradual qualitative concept including the option of quantitative conceptualisation

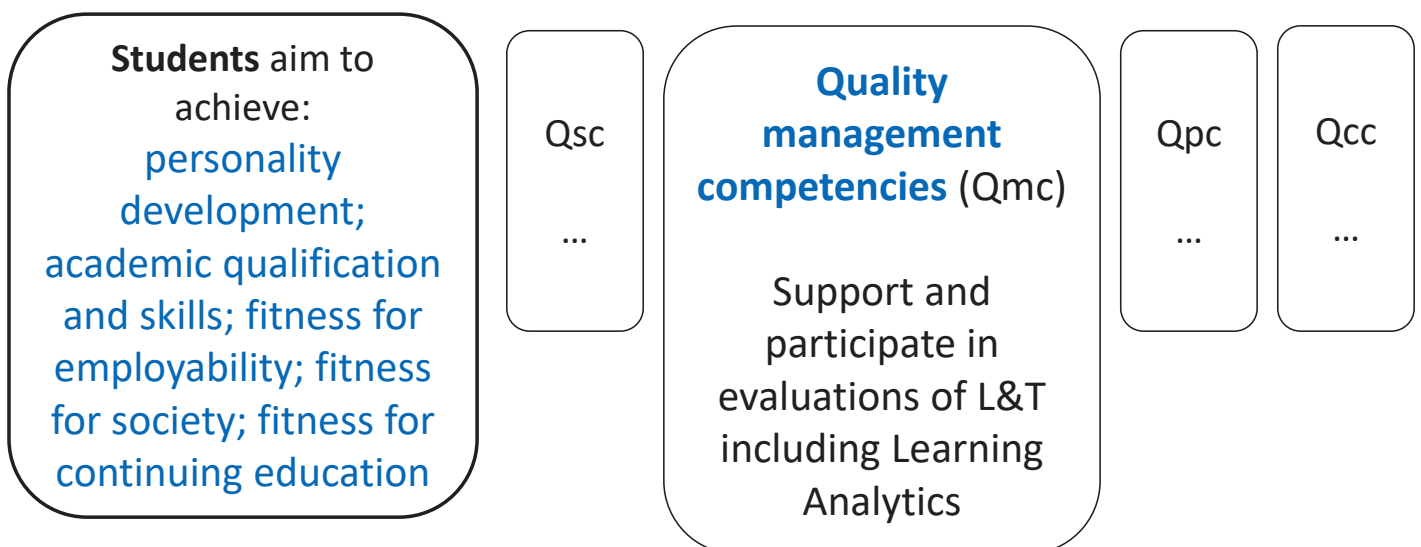
Assumption: “quality” in HE is an **“umbrella term of practice”** with diverse and complex conceptual sub-dimensions which reflect the **multiple-hybrid performance** character of HEIs that are driven by and towards **multiple purposes** whose pursuit often compete for the same resources

## Analytical Framework of Quality Literacy (FQL) (1): a complex networked concept



All competencies in constructive alignment with respective stakeholder goals

## Analytical Framework of Quality Literacy (FQL) (2): a complex networked concept



## FQL (3)

Lecturers aim to enable/support:  
 personality development;  
 academic qualification; fitness for employability;  
 fitness for society;  
 continuing education

Qsc

...

### Quality management competencies (Qmc)

- Support and participate in quality assurance and enhancement to meet the requirements for compliance of L&T with
  - L&T standards
  - motivating students for transformative and holistic continuous self-directed learning
  - enhancement orientation
  - fitness for/of purpose
    - Value for money
    - Show responsibility/ accountability for L&T quality

Qpc

...

Qcc

...

## FQL (4)

Lecturers aim to enable/support:  
 personality development;  
 academic qualification; fitness for employability;  
 fitness for society;  
 continuing education

Qsc

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Qmc

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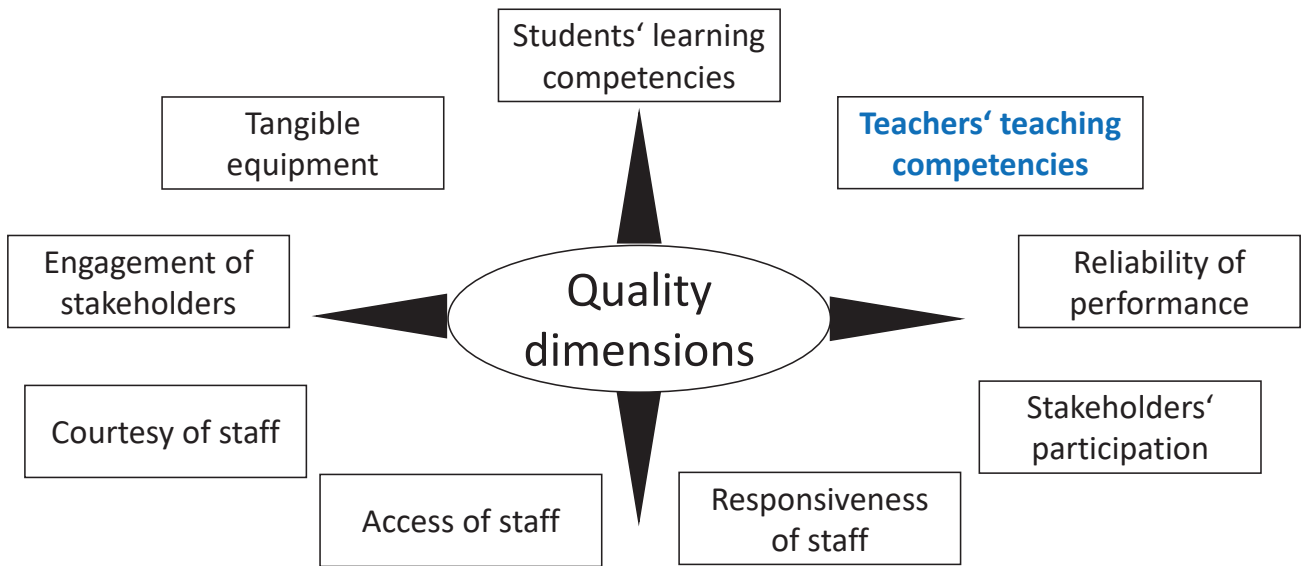
### Quality practice competencies (Qpc)

- Apply didactics (e.g. learning and teaching theories; pedagogies) and learning and teaching technologies that foster transformative and holistic continuous self-directed learning and collaborative learning
  - Develop and improve study programmes and courses
  - Participate in evaluations of learning and teaching including Learning Analytics (e.g., assessments and (satisfaction) surveys)

Qcc

...

FQL (4a): Further differentiations of **students' and lecturers quality practice competencies** = Quality dimensions in L&T to be grasped by PIs



FQL (4b): Further differentiations of **students' and lecturers quality practice competencies** = Quality dimensions in L&T to be grasped by PIs

**Teachers' teaching competencies**

<b>Theoretical</b> subject knowledge	<b>Practical</b> subject-related skills	<b>Methodological</b> knowledge and skills	<b>Supplementary</b> knowledge and skills (self-c., social c., inter- and transdisc. c., ICT c.)	<b>Pedagogical</b> knowledge and skills	<b>Ethical</b> knowledge and skills
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Competencies correspond to performance indicators (according to relevant quality criteria to be identified) that could be assessed, for example, by satisfaction surveys of students

For selections of these PIs, stakeholder assessments and expectations are available (collected from interviews (56 interviews with various actors: quality managers, vice presidents, deans of study) and an online survey (44 PIs, 117 complete responses (SQELT-REP, 2020))

Purposes:

**Personality development; Academic qualification; fitness for employability; fitness for society**

## FQL (5)

**Quality managers** aim to achieve:  
 evidence-informed organisational development including quality management (cf. Leiber, 2019b) **without ideological and epistemological reductionisms** such as the purely market- and profit-oriented training of students as product customers

Qsc

...

## Quality management competencies (Qmc)

- Implement institutional performance data management policy
- Participate in quasi-market competition of higher education institutions (e.g., participate in rankings)
- Implement institutional risk management (e.g., financial risks; risks of demographic development; economical risks; pandemic risks)

Qpc

...

Qcc

...

## FQL (6)

Organisational managers/leadership aim to achieve ...

Employers aim to find ...

Policy makers aim to support ...

Taxpayers etc. aim to receive ...

Qsc

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Qmc

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Qpc

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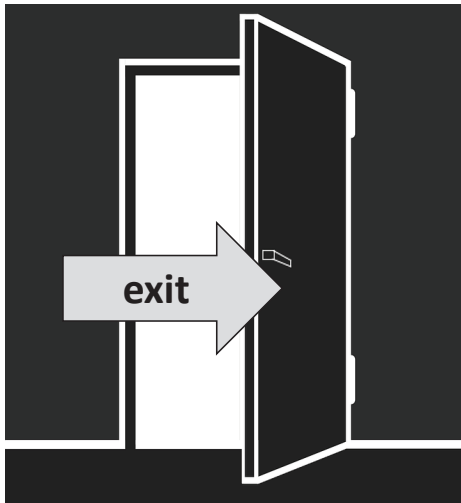
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## Summary and conclusions



**FQL** helps doing justice to the complex “phenomenon of quality in HE” by suggesting a **coherent complex networked concept of quality in HE**

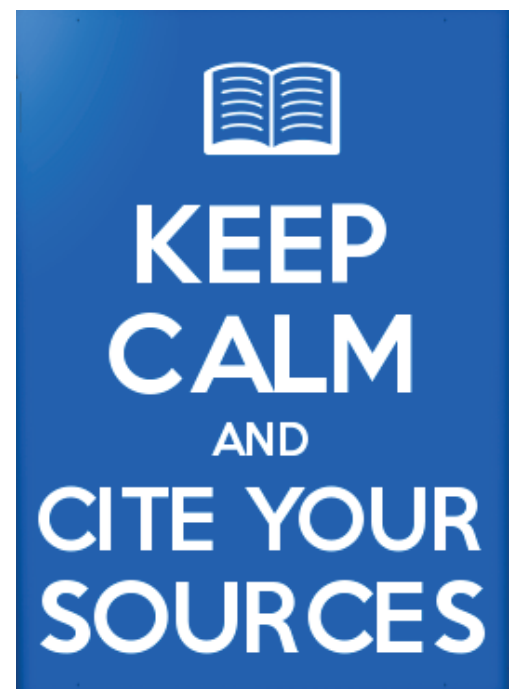
**Concept of quality in HE is not: slippery; buzzword; vague; elusive; radical constructivist**

Achieved by

- Clarifying the (4) different dimensions of quality literacy
- Clarifying the different stakeholder perspectives (goals and expectations) on quality
- Showing the interdependence, overlaps, competition for resources of the various competencies
- Relating quality competencies to performance indicators

## Motivations/triggers/sources for FQL

- **Literature on quality in higher education**
- Literacy concepts (Lindquist, 2015; UNESCO, 2019)
- E-learning literacy (Ehlers, 2007)
- “Quality Culture Inventory” (Sattler and Sonntag, 2018)
- “Quality work in higher education” (Elken and Stensaker, 2018)
- Theories of L&T (Du Toit-Brits, 2018; Leiber, 2022)
- SQELT Comprehensive Performance Indicator Set (SQELT-PI, 2020)
- Report on Various Stakeholders’ Assessment of the SQELT Performance Indicator Set (SQELT-Rep, 2020)



# Limitations

- No systematic literature review (however, benefit may be contested)
- Small, non-representative survey/interview samples (purposive sampling: selection based on variance maximisation of quality management units and HEIs: organisational form, size, profile etc.)

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