Quality in schools

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Abstract. Ballast on public and private finance connected with fast growth of academic education increases interest in assurance of quality and standards of academic education. A school needs to show that quality of its curricula and academic degrees is of importance and that it is willing to implement means to assure and demonstrate this quality. Current theoretical outcomes of the study are devoted to the definition of the content of quality under the conditions of a college. In the results of the paper and in the discussion we interpret the project of FMK UCM in Trnava focused on creation of a cyclically directed system of evaluation, whose result will be concrete measures for increasing quality of academic education in the curriculum of marketing communication.

Keywords: quality, measuring quality at a College, project, FMK UCM v Trnave.
JEL Codes: M31, I 21.

1. Introduction

The term “quality” “is often used in various contexts and meanings, therefore it is necessary first of all to define its content in the conditions of a school. Quality of the system is a feature of the object with a given structure to reach at given conditions optimal meeting of the requirements, resulting from satisfying needs of the involved partners. Quality of the system at accomplishing desired targets may be ensured only by quality of its components and their mutual relationships, thus quality of the structure of the system and quality of its management. Quality of a school is the optimal functioning of the processes at schools, mainly the process of education, with which partners of the school are satisfied, which is objectively measured and evaluated [6].

Management of quality in schools as coordinated activities focused on quality management, on permanent improvement, is related to the following:

- Educational system in the state – its targets, philosophy, content, structure of the system, principles of management, funding and its other characteristics.
- School (educational institution) – each school should elaborate its own system of quality management, which would be related to all processes in the school and all school employees. For the
processes, with which the school maintains and develops quality, we use the term „quality management of school“ (assurance of school quality).

- Process of education – as the most important of all the processes in the school, whose quality is decisive for the quality of the schools. If the quality management of school has not been realized yet, the quality of education of the subject may also be improved by an individual teacher (or group of teachers).
- Self-management of studying by each learner – as the culmination of the efforts to reach quality in school. The result should be the student, who takes responsibility for the management of their studying and self-development, they acquire own studying competences, they know their preferred studying style, mega cognition and mega studying; they implement an in-depth approach to the studying, self-motivation for life-long studying.

Thus, the quality in school is related to the quality in the system of:

- The school (as educational institution), quality manager is the headmaster;
- The education (as the most important process in the school), quality manager is the teacher;
- Self-studying of the learner (self-development of their personalities, as the culmination of the impact of the school and teachers on the students), quality manager is the student.

Quality of the school is the rate of:

- Satisfaction of the partners, who are the students, teachers, council of the school, other personnel of the school, parents, founder, future employers, pedagogical institutions, school inspection, public and state authorities, sponsors, foundations, cooperating organizations.
- Ability to create values. If the school curriculum is in harmony with the targets, there comes to full development of the personality of the student.
- Usefulness. If the curriculum of the school is meaningful, usable in practice for the employment, or further study.
- Perfection. If the school programme is appropriate to the possibilities of the pupils, „tailored“.

The accomplishment of the above-mentioned criteria requires from the school to continuously follow its own ways of reaching the set, optimized targets and to try to best meet the needs and expectations of their pupils, to strive to improve their results. [1].

2. Measuring quality at a college

In the Berlin Communiqué of the 11th September 2003, ministers of signatory states of the Bologna Declaration called the European net to assure quality in academic education, to create the conventional set of standards, procedures and guidelines to assure quality by means of its members and to seek for the ways to assure the system of mutual evaluation for the agencies for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or authorities. The result is the report Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in European environment of academic education. [7]. In the sense of requirements involved in the report, the Faculty of Mass Media Communication University of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava (FMK UCM) performs the project for internal quality assurance of academic institutions.

By carrying out the project Implementation of innovative models of evaluation, monitoring and quality assurance under the conditions of FMK UCM in Trnava, FMK UCM in Trnava will prepare the place for direct measuring of quality of the curriculum of marketing communication on the basis of pre-set criteria and
implementation of measures to increase the quality of the curriculum. The project is focused on creation and implementation of the complex system of direct quality measurement of academic education in the curriculum of marketing communication, whose outcome will be increased in the quality of education. On the basis of requirements resulting from the intentions of the University of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, it is necessary to create a system which will generate a system of evaluation on the internal, as well as external level. The model of system of evaluation is based on requirements resulting from the strategic document Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European environment of academic education, elaborated by ENQA in cooperation with EUA, ESIB and EURASHE (approved by ministers of education of signatory states of Bologna Declaration, Bergen 2005). In the sense of requirements, the project reflects European standards and guidelines for internal assurance of quality at universities [5].

FMK UCM in Trnava carries out the project on the basis of submitted financial contribution from the Operational Programme Education from the sources of European Union.

3. Aims of the project

The strategic aim of the project Implementation of innovative models of evaluation, monitoring and quality assurance under the conditions of FMK UCM in Trnava is to support the increase in the quality of education with the aim of adaptation to topical perspective needs of knowledge-based economy. A specific aim of the project is to adjust academic education to the needs of knowledge-based economy. The strategic target of the project will be accomplished by:

- Implementing the system of direct quality measuring in the curriculum of marketing communication.
- Implementing the complex set of measures to increase the quality of education in the curriculum of marketing communication.
- Eliminating information inequality in the relationship university – public.
- Creating cyclic rating system of quality while using external evaluation tools.

The main principles of the project are as follows:

- Universities should have at their disposal strategies and procedures for quality assurance and standard of their curricula and award of the academic degrees.
- Principles and procedures of quality assurance should have a form of official documents and strategies (publicly available, covering co-participation of students and external authorities).
- Universities should have formal mechanisms for approvals, regular revisions and controls of the curricula.
- Students should be evaluated on the basis on pre-set and publicly available criteria, regulations and procedures.
- Decision-making within a university should be based on explicit and previous public-made criteria.
- Universities should regularly publish topical, impersonal and unbiased information about the curricula, their graduates and quality standards.

The principles of quality assurance of the project:

- Explicit formulation of expected outcomes from the process of studying.
- Focusing on composition, structure and content of the curricula.
- Emphasis on new forms and methods of teaching.
- Following the progress of the students and their study outcomes.
- Regular evaluation of the curricula (including also external evaluators).
- Regularly obtained feedback from employers and the work market [2].

4. Target groups
The direct target group are students in the full time and distance forms of the curriculum of marketing communication and PhD students in the full time and distance forms of the curriculum of marketing communication.

TABLE I. Target groups. Source: own processing. [3]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Followed criteria</th>
<th>Bachelor, Master level of the study</th>
<th>PhD. level of the study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of target group</td>
<td>1360 students</td>
<td>48 PhD students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age structure</td>
<td>18-26 years</td>
<td>23-31 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic position (level of districts of the mentioned regions)</td>
<td>Regions of Trnava, Nitra, Banská Bystrica and Žilina</td>
<td>Regions of Trnava, Nitra, Banská Bystrica and Žilina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>secondary, bachelor</td>
<td>Graduate of academic education, II. level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>female: 75%, male: 25 %.</td>
<td>female: 60%, male: 40 %.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnicity</td>
<td>Slovak nationality, Hungarian nationality, others</td>
<td>Slovak nationality, Hungarian nationality,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>socio-economic status</td>
<td>University students</td>
<td>PhD students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. **Project activities**

The project is based on four fundamental activities:

- Proposal and verification of the direct measuring system of the quality of academic education in the curriculum of marketing communication. The activity was carried out from January 2012 to December 2012.
- Proposal and verification of measures for increasing the quality of academic education in the curriculum of marketing communication. The activity has been carried out from October 2012 to December 2013.
- Proposal and verification of measures for elimination of information inequalities in the relationship between university and the public regarding academic education in the study of marketing communication. The activity has been carried out from January 2013 to December 2013.
- Proposal and verification of evaluation of the results of measures for increasing the quality of academic education in the curriculum of marketing communication based on the system of direct measurement of the quality of academic education in the study of marketing communication. The activity has been carried out from January 2013 to December 2013 [3].

5.1 **Proposal and verification of the system of direct quality measuring of the academic education in the curriculum of marketing communication**

The aim of the first activity was to create and to verify a complex system of direct quality measuring of the academic education in the curriculum of marketing communication, while using external evaluation tools and innovative software solution, which would contribute to the increase of quality of educational process at FMK UCM in Trnava.
In the introduction phase of the activity realization, a complex analysis of the curriculum was carried out, which became the background for follow-up development of a conception of system of direct quality measurement of education in the curriculum. The conception will serve for developing a complex model of the system for direct quality measurement. Consequently, the model will be elaborated into electronic informational system, to which a user guideline will be created. Next, training will be carried out for the evaluators, who will be involved into the system. After the training, the evaluation system will be verified within the cycle of evaluation of the curriculum of marketing communication.

The first activity demanded following:

- Analysis of the current state and needs of education under the conditions of the curriculum of marketing communication.
- Elaboration of the conception and creation of the model of the system of direct quality measurement of education in the curriculum, system of evaluation of the results and comparison of level of notions, skills and key competences of students and graduates of the curriculum of marketing communication.
- Development of software solution for internal and external systems of evaluation, elaboration of user guideline and methodical procedures.
- Training of lecturers and evaluators to the system of direct quality measurement of academic education in the curriculum of marketing communication.
- Elaboration of assessment reports of the curriculum, subject of assessment reports, assessment reports on the outputs from the lecturing in the curriculum of marketing communication.

Feedback was ensured directly by setting the system for quality measurement and its pilot verification for the curriculum of marketing communication. Feedback is the main tool for obtaining the desired information for the system of evaluation. A multi-level external-internal system for obtaining feedback from all relevant participants was developed and by: inputs and outputs of IS, statistic information, assessment reports.

The outputs of the first activity are as follows:

- Analysis of the curriculum of marketing communication.
- Development and model of the system of direct quality measurement.
- Informational system for direct quality measuring.
- User guideline.
- Training of evaluators.
- Cycle of evaluation of the curriculum [2].

5.2 Proposal and verification of measures for increasing the quality of academic education in the curriculum of marketing communication

The aim of the second activity is development and verification of a complex proposal of measures for increasing the quality of education in the curriculum of marketing communication while using the transfer know-how from external environment. One of the important parts will be a co-working centre, which will become a renowned platform for the transfer of the needs of the practice with the university.

In the introduction phase of the performance of the activity a complex proposal of measures for increasing the quality of education in the curriculum will be elaborated, which will be consequently implemented into the study programme, what will cause their verification. A platform of the co-working centre will be created, for intense exchanges and discussions, which will lead to further outputs to increase the quality of education. After establishing the proposal of measures, these will be integrated into the programme marketing communication on the level of subjects (elaboration of adjusted methods of teaching, syllabuses, outputs from the lecturing, pilot verification). Consequently, training for the PhD students at FMK UCM in Trnava will take place, as one of the main participants of the future increase of the quality of
the study programmes, whereas a direct interconnection of current outcomes and outputs into the future work of lectures will be ensured.

The second activity will require following activities:

- Elaboration of a complex proposal of measures to increase the quality of academic education in the curriculum of marketing communication. On the basis of the established system of direct quality measurement of academic education in the study programme and its practical verification – implementation, outputs out of this system will be provided, which will lead to proposals of measures to increase the quality of academic education in the curriculum of marketing communication. The proposal of measures will be based on recommendations of internal employees within the first phase of evaluation, as well as from recommendations of external evaluators within the second phase of evaluation.

- Establishing the co-working centre. Co-working is an innovative trend developing in the academic as well as entrepreneurial environments, especially in Western Europe and North America. It is a centre, where on the one spot independent people from external environment are concentrated (for example graphic designers, marketers, copywriters, experts on internet marketing, on production of web sites, visual communication etc.). There is necessary technical equipment and creative background at hand. In the academic environment, it is a kind of creative „business incubator“. Within it, the students can develop their abilities, skills and competences by means of practical activity focused on real business doing. Students working in the co-working centre will be able to lay the basis of their future business and to verify their entrepreneurial ideas and concepts in practice. A valuable asset is also the relationship with real entrepreneurial environment, obtaining new contacts and transfer of requirements directly into the conception of the study programme. By means of the centre, it will be possible to directly measure acquired notions of the students in the surrounding of the incubator (very similar to real experience out of practice). Simultaneously, in this way important data for the feedback and verification of the system of quality evaluation and proposals of measures for increasing quality will be provided.

- Integration of the measures for the increase of quality of the educational programme marketing communication, elaboration of adjusted teaching methods, syllabuses, outputs from the study, pilot verification. Internal experts – on the basis of outputs of the evaluation system and conclusions of the work groups – will incorporate them into the curricula (at the level of subjects) individual requirements and proposals, whereas there will come to adjustments of individual attributes of the study programme. This will lead to the increase in quality of the study programme, which will be repeatedly cyclically verified within the system of direct measurement of the quality of the study programme. Consequently, there will be all elaborated materials and created documents assessed in the work groups and objected by external experts.

- Development of key competences and generic skills of the graduated from the study programme marketing communication. Trainings are designed for internal and external PhD students at FMK UCM in Trnava – in the size of 40 people. Trainings will be focused on development of the following skills:
  - Research and analytic skills (qualitative and quantitative methods of research, work with statistic software designed to process sociological data, work with informational sources etc.).
  - System of direct quality measurement of the study programmes and evaluation of the study programmes [2].

Outcomes of the second activity are, or may be until the end of 2013, as follows:

- Co-working centre. Students at FMK UCM in Trnava had the opportunity, in the term until February 24th 2013, to apply for the co-working centre PoinTT. FMK UCM in Trnava – by means of this project – offers a chance for 15 of them. It required only writing a cover letter, in which the students described, why they wanted to become a member of PoinTT and what they expected from the
membership. In case a student has already had any idea or started a project, it is necessary to describe, where they would like to move by using PoTT. Within its activities, it organizes for its members lectures of Slovak start-up-ists, workshops focused on business and mentoring from successful Slovak entrepreneurs.

- A complex proposal of measures for the increase of the quality in education in the study programme.
- Adjusted curriculum of marketing communication – on the basis of proposals [8].

5.3 Proposal and verification of measures to eliminate information inequalities in the relationship university – public regarding academic education in the curriculum of marketing communication

The aim of the third activity is to eliminate information inequalities in the relationship between the university and the public regarding academic education in the curriculum of marketing communication.

In the introduction phase of the achievement of the activity, materials will be provided for an informational campaign in the environment of secondary schools. Materials will be elaborated by internal experts working at FMK UCM in Trnava, an on-line game for students will be created and an informational campaign will be launched, which will be provided by internal experts working at FMK UCM in Trnava. Simultaneously, a complex proposal of measures for decreasing information inequalities will be outlined. Consequently, an informational Internet portal will be developed about the study programme with digital content. There will also be outlined a set of presentations under interactive form about the study programme. Internal specialists will ensure active e-informing, an e-library will be created. After implementation of the informational tools, an analysis will be worked out, a research, which will be carried out by internal experts working at FMK, where the impact of measures on elimination of information inequalities in the relationship between university and the public will be analysed, regarding academic education in the study programme marketing communication.

The second activity will require the following activities:

- Informational campaign in the secondary schools environment with the focus on the explanation of advantages, requirements and character of the study of marketing communication at FMK UCM in Trnava and training of career advisors. Informational campaign will include the following components:
  - Preparation, elaboration and distribution of informational brochures for students.
  - Creation of promotional ON-line game focused on development of creative activities in the field of marketing communication.
  - Contest for the students of secondary schools focused on, for example production of posters, photographs, websites, arrangement and promotion of school events, etc.
  - Informational campaign in the environment of social networks (Facebook, Twitter...).
  - Outlining proposal of measures for elimination of information inequalities. The activity will be provided by internal experts, who on the basis of the analysis will work out a complex proposal containing measures for the elimination of information inequalities in the relationship between the university and the public within the study programme marketing communication.
  - Creating informational Internet portal on the study programme with digital content – a set of presentations under interactive form and active e-informing, e-library.
  - Verification of measures, research of targeting of informational tools.

After informational campaign there will be worked out an analysis – internal research of FMK UCM in Trnava, where there will be elaborated the analysis of the impact and targeting of used informational tools. Simultaneously, there will be worked out a proposal of further informational tools.

The outputs of the second activity are, or until the end of 2013, will be as follows:

- Promotional materials to promote the study programme.
- Informational campaign.
Proposal containing measures for elimination of information inequalities.
- Web portal with digital content.
- Analysis of targeting of informational tools [2].

5.4 Proposal and verification of evaluation of results of measures for increasing the quality in academic education in the curriculum of marketing communication based on the system of direct quality measurement in academic education in the marketing communication study programme

The aim of the last activity is a proposal and verification of evaluation of the results of measures for increasing quality in academic education based on the system of direct quality measurement in academic education in the marketing communication study programme.

A system of cyclic evaluation and elaboration and integration of measurements for increase of quality will be developed, which will be provided by internal experts of UCM. Consequently, the whole system will be analysed and a complex analysis will be created (by external experts), who will also work out proposals for system improvement. The last activity will require the following activities:

- Creating cyclic system of measurements and feedback. After complex implementation of the system of direct quality measurement of academic education in the study programme and implementation of the system of periodical measurements to increase the quality of academic education in the study programme functionality of the implemented cyclic system will be verified on the basis of cyclic system and feedback. A conception of cyclic evaluation of the study programmes and integration of measures to increase quality in the study programmes will be created, which will be consequently implemented.

- Elaboration of a complex analysis, whose output will be the evaluation of the implemented systems and their benefit. A complex analysis will be worked out, whose output will be the evaluation of implemented systems and their benefit. Analysis will be provided by external experts, who will at the same time prepare proposals for improvement of the system and its functionality on the basis of recommendations of created work group. These proposals will consequently be incorporated and the system will be developed and subsequently extended for other study programmes at the university.

Outputs of the second activity are, or until the end of the year 2013 will be as follows:

- Conception of cyclic evaluation of the study programmes and integration of measures to increase quality in the study programmes
- Complex analysis of implemented systems and their benefit [2].

6. Conclusion

The term ´quality´ is often used in different contexts and meanings. At schools, the quality relates to the quality of the school, the teaching and the self-studying of students. Accomplishing criteria of quality requires from the school to permanently follow its own ways of reaching the set, optimized targets and to try improving its results. The efforts to implement the system of direct quality measuring at FMK UCM in Trnava for the curriculum of marketing communication is supported by the sources of the European Union, the Education operational programme. In case of the success of the project, FMK UCM in Trnava intends to spread the system of quality measurement into other curricula and later on into the whole university.
7. References


