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Quality Assurance in the Light of the ENQA Policy in Greek Technological Educational Institutions (TEIs): Challenges and Prospects

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QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE LIGHT OF THE ENQA POLICY IN GREEK TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (TEIS): CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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This paper provides an overview of quality assurance in the Greek higher education. It begins by considering the development of this issue and it outlines quality assurance framework in Greek universities. It also addresses the challenges faced by higher education and concludes with several recommendations for consideration by a higher education department which used self evaluation as an instructional technique. In this paper, we report the findings of a pilot self-evaluation which examines the Greek system of quality assessment based on the experiences at TEI in the Department of Logistics Management in Thiva. The structure and the operation of the quality assurance procedure are held with respect to what ENQA defines, in order to ensure that higher education maintains and enhances its quality in a competitive environment.

Introduction

As governments in many parts of the world have considered their agenda for higher education over the last decade, the issues of quality assurance, school effectiveness and improvement have been vital in their discussions. Educational organizations such as OECD or the European Commission have reinforced trends for new structures and approaches to Quality Assurance. The changes in the global environment and the challenges emerged for higher education have led to the development of the Declaration that would harmonize the architecture of the European higher education. In this context, a common framework of reference for quality of the programmes, credits and degrees is established. There are wide differences among countries in their approach to quality. Governments have taken steps to strengthen quality by introducing mechanisms of management control.

Quality has been a central issue in the European Union since 1980s. Some countries have considered the evaluation of quality assurance systems as being an effective way of ensuring quality. In addition, evaluation, measuring learning results and students’ satisfaction in their studies are in the centre of universities attention. Institutional evaluation, accreditation, audit, degree programme evaluation are undertaken in slightly different ways in various countries, based on the educational policy and strategy. “The target of institutional evaluation includes all the activities of a higher education organization. […] The evaluation deals with processes of strategic management, decision-making, organization and quality assurance as well as resources and results.” (Hamalainen et al, 2001, p.7)

The term of Quality Assurance is defined by OECD (2004b) as follows: Quality assurance refers to a set of approaches and procedures regarding the measurement, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintenance or enhancement of the quality of higher education institutions/providers and programs, or the processes by which the achievement of education program standards, as established by institutions, professional organizations, government and other standard-setting bodies, is measured. (pp.18-19)
As Burnham (1994) points out

*Assurance is an internal process concerned with ensuring the integrity of the relationship between intentions and outcomes. [...] Quality assurance recognizes the autonomy of organizations and seeks to enhance their capacity to operate in a responsive way. It thus removes the notions of dependence, control and hierarchical accountability. These characteristics are reflected in the internal operations of a quality organization; individuals become responsible for the quality of their work within a context of agreed procedures, support, training and resources.*

(p.169)

**The Greek Education System in Higher Education**

According to the Greek Constitution, higher education is offered exclusively by the state. The Greek government is required to provide moral, intellectual, theoretical, general-purpose education and vocational training for all Greek citizens. Education is free of charge, since it is almost entirely state-funded, and non-discriminatory; equal educational opportunities are also provided. Greek universities are public institutions and are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (YP.E.P.TH). The education system is centralized, having the government determine higher education institute’s creation, structure and operations. “National legislation determines university budgets, procurement, financial oversight, and employment. Universities are almost exclusively state-funded, through budgets or programmes (e.g. specific research programmes), and generally have only negligible funds since no student fees are charged.” (Bourantas et al., 1998, p.1) However, Greece’s national policy environment does encourage, to a greater or lesser extent, higher education institutions to seek greater commercial opportunities and align their programmes and existence with industry needs. Greek universities have the authority to accredit their own programmes and they also have primary responsibility for their academic standards as well as quality assurance processes that underpin them.

In the Article 16 of the Greek Constitution, Universities are determined as legal entities under public law, with full self-administration under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. “The initial planning and application of government policy in the field of education, as well as the responsibility for administering the education system in all its sectors, services and levels, is held by the Minister of National Education and Religious Affairs (YPEPTH).” (National Reports 2004-2005, p.1) Universities are autonomous institutions that are responsible for managing the revenues derived from state grants and from their own assets. As Bourantas et al. (1998) state in their paper on University evaluation systems in Greece, “universities are structured into different faculties that are in turn subdivided into departments [that] are mainly responsible for planning and implementing educational programmes and granting diplomas. Each department is allowed to grant its own diploma and has considerable autonomy on educational matters.” (p.1)

Technological Education Institutes (TEIs) are the “descendant” of the Higher Technical Vocational Centres (KATE) which operated until 1983. Their operation and organization is governed by law. However, some issues are regulated by the internal rules of each TEI. “Technological Education Institutes (TEIs) belong to Higher Education, under law 1404/83. They are also legal entities under public law, fully self-governed, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, too, and their operation and organization is governed by law, while more specific issues are regulated by the internal rules of each TEI.” (National Reports 2004-2005, p.9)
Unlike universities, they are market and professionally-oriented, and enjoy more direct links with industry, production units and enterprises where their students usually receive training during an industrial placement. TEIs provide theoretical and practical training to enable graduates to adapt easily to a working environment in flux and ever increasing market demands. (Kaplanis and Nanoussi, 2001, p.3)

It is worth mentioning that the governing structure of the TEI, as it is described in Law 1404/83, is characterized by decentralization, as long as much responsibility and decision making is assigned to each department.

Quality Assurance in Higher Education In Greece

Since 1999, the concept of quality in Higher Education in Europe has been influenced by the follow-up process of the Bologna Declaration which “encourages, among other things, the European co-operation in quality assurance of higher education with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies.” (http://www.enq.eu/bologna_overview.lasso). The Bologna Declaration (1999), which was signed by 29 countries, includes a phrase on the “the promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance with view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies.” (p.2) In the European context, the newly created ENQA, under the auspices of the European Commission becomes the main platform of exchange on quality issues in Europe. “The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education [ENQA] was established in 2000 to promote European co-operation in the field of quality assurance.” (http://www.enqa.eu/history.lasso) In 2004, the Network was transformed into the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. The quality culture and its implementation must be strengthen among the ENQA members.

In most European countries, autonomous quality assurance agencies have been established on national level. All agencies impose that quality improvement is an objective of their primary activity. Universities regard a national quality assessment system as a guarantee of their quality. Combined with the European development in the education field (the Bologna process), a legal framework for the establishment of a national system formed the background for the Government to launch a new law for Quality Assurance. “Under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, higher education institutions and the active participation of stockholders, the implementation of the Bologna Process has been promoted by a number of legislative reforms. The Ministry of Education [drew] up a new legislative framework on the structure and operation of higher education institutions.” (Eurydice, 2007, p.140)

According to the Law 3374/2005 a Single National Agency in charge of Quality Assurance is an essential feature of Greek Higher Education System. It aims at quality improvement through external evaluation to support higher education institutions in their efforts to continuously improve its quality and at advising the Government on the necessary actions and policies to be taken. “The evaluation procedures pertaining to higher education institutions are coordinated and supported at a national level by the independent administrative authority entitled 'Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education' (HQAA)” (http://www.adip.gr/index_en.html) It also aims at improving transparency, comparability and accountability of Greek Higher Education System. Therefore, the Greek System of Quality Assurance and assessment does not contain accreditation characteristics, nor does it aim at ranking or grading the Greek Higher Education Institutions.

The Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency (HQAA) was established by law in 2005 as a statutory body. “The ENQA Board granted Associate status to HQAA on 7 September 2007.
According to the Regulations of ENQA, full membership status can be granted after two years of operation and following an external review." (http://www.adip.gr/index_en.html) Its goal is to join ENQA as a full member and to proceed with other agencies to a European cooperation on quality assurance in order to take advantage of other countries’ effective practices and methodologies. However, very few universities and Technological Education Institutes voluntarily carried out self-assessment within the framework of rules and regulations set by the ENQA.

According to the Article 10, par.2 of the Law 3374 “the [Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education] HQAA guarantees the transparency of the evaluation procedures and its mission is to support higher education institutions in the implementation of the procedures which aim at safeguarding and improving the quality of higher education […]” (p.14) More specifically, the Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (HQAA) is established to safeguard the public interest in standards of higher education qualifications and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality. Each institution of higher education is responsible for the standards and quality of its academic programmes. Each has its own internal procedures for attaining the sufficient and appropriate standards and enhancing the quality of its provision, mainly through the assessment of the students and the institutional procedures concerning the approval and monitoring of the programmes.

*The ADIP was established by the 2005 Law on Quality Assurance in Higher Education. The Agency operates at two levels, namely that of internal as well as external evaluation and review schemes. The ADIP aims at quality improvement in higher education institutions through external evaluation processes. The responsibilities of the agency are specified within a legislative framework and mainly involve the evaluation of study programmes and institutions, as well as organizational audit. The autonomy and independence of the body responsible for quality assurance in terms of procedures, methods and the persons in charge is safeguarded by law, in order to secure the effectiveness and validity of the process as well as fairness, transparency and the acceptance of the results. (Eurydice, 2007, p.142)*

**Presentation of The Department of Logistics Management**

The Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Chalkida is one of twelve independent and self-governed T.E.Is that constitute the national system of higher technological education in Greece and the only academic institution in the broader area of Evia island. The TEI of Chalkida is comprised by two major Faculties, the Faculty of Management and Economics and the Faculty of Applied Sciences. In the Faculty of Management and Economics the Department of Logistics Management is included. The Department of Logistics Management at the TEI of Chalkida, in the branch of THIVA, was founded to provide students with knowledge that will enable them to address the challenge businesses encounter in Logistics management field. More specifically, the Department of Logistics Management was founded in September 2005 as an outbuilding of the Supply Management Department (SMD) in Chalkida. The DLM is situated in completely new buildings in Thiva, in a distance of 85 kilometres from Athens, the Greek capital. Thiva is an industrial centre which is called VIPE. The teaching staff consists of 25 professors and five office clerks. One of the office clerks is the head librarian of the University Library.
The operation of such a department in an industrial area contributes to the development of local area by the daily presence of professors, students, the cultural events that are held, as well as any co-operations between the department and local businesses and organizations that take place. It has also moved towards European integration by organizing conferences and workshops in current issues. The local community is undoubtedly benefited from the establishment of this department. It has become an important centre in the city’s cultural and intellectual life and plays a significant role in the region’s socio-economic life. Furthermore, the logistics enterprises can find prospective logisticians who can respond effectively to the increasing requirements and challenges of the contemporary business environment.

The Institute has the unique status of being the only such school of its kind. Through the expertise of its outstanding faculty, the Institute provides comprehensive, up-to-date knowledge to academic students who want to successfully compete in today's complex logistics and supply-chain industry. The curriculum of the Institute spans all possible areas of involvement within the logistics, inventory management, transportation and supply-chain fields. In addition, the Institute and its courses interact well to the other business disciplines, such as finance, accounting, economics and business law. The Department of Logistics Management has developed the following mission statement to represent its commitments and goals: The goals of the Department of Logistics Management are to promote the effective learning and teaching of theories and practices in the field of Logistics and the learning and practice of professional communication skills in the department and in the community.

To achieve this, the department offers modules in Logistics that meet students’ communicative, academic and professional needs; supports a technology-based learning environment for teaching professional communication skills; seeks to provide staff with the opportunity for continued professional development; conducts research and development activities which support the Department’s goals; provides resources and expertise in the Logistics field through seminars, conferences and workshops; it encourages collaboration with other institutions.

The institutional’s goals refer to the academic standards, to the expectancies of society, to students’ aspirations, to the demands of the industry and of employers and to the fundamental principles of the subject area. In addition to the above, the Department’s overall purpose is to advance knowledge and understanding in the field of Logistics. The structure of the programme is designed such that to offer the candidates the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding in order to face the challenges of the dynamic and complex environment of business logistics; and also to evaluate and apply the principles and the methodological approaches in planning, organising and controlling logistics activities.

The academic programme follows an interactive structure between general management and logistics subjects. Starting with a major content of core courses in business administration, the first terms provide a sound knowledge in management fields. Progressively, the core courses shift in emphasis to specialization in logistics. Apart from providing extensive expertise in logistics and general management, soft skills such as intercultural understanding and social competencies are fostered. Students’ knowledge is provided so that will enable them expertise in their academic field, through 35 hours of lectures per week in each semester. The knowledge and skills gained within each subject will support the learning of the other. The programme comprises the same number of credits as a single honours programme. Upon successful completion of this course, the students will have an overall understanding of the principles of logistics management. Students will have acquired the intellectual base necessary for understanding and managing complex
organisational systems. They will have received a professionally-oriented education which facilitates entry into advanced management training and practice. Graduates are expected to find employment in a managerial capacity, particularly, and not exclusively, in the logistics sector. Graduates have gone on to work for planning consultancies, government agencies and commercial providers.

**Internal Evaluation of Quality Assurance in the Department of Logistics Management**

International trends in higher education indicate that European countries are involved in a global movement towards quality assessment and improvement, affecting the way institutional autonomy, accountability, innovation and strategic management operate.

*Higher education institutions are encouraged to set up their own internal quality assurance mechanisms to provide a sound basis for external evaluation. The aim is to combine institutional autonomy and accountability effectively within the national quality regulations framework. Each institution has the right to independent decision-making and is therefore responsible for devising its own quality assurance system for assessing education and administrative and research functions, although general provisions are set out in the legislation. Furthermore, it is expected that teaching and administrative staff as well as students, will be main participants and contributors in this process. (Eurydice, 2007, p.143)*

However, a few higher education institutions have developed internal processes to ensure quality in the areas of teaching, learning and assessment. There are processes to monitor and evaluate course curriculum on a continuous basis, including the evaluation of student feedback.

Although law 1404/83 set some evaluation procedures for teacher, quality issues went unaddressed until 1992. According to the Law No 3374, “Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Credit Transfer and Accumulation System- Diploma Supplement”, Article 1, paragraph 2, subject to evaluation are the academic units and their programmes or other services offered in the framework of their mission. “On the basis of the evaluation results, the academic institutions and the State adopt the necessary measures in order to assure and improve the quality of the work performed by higher education institutions in the framework of their mission to provide high quality [in] higher education [in order to] secure the widest possible transparency of the national higher education system.” (Law No 3374, Article 1, paragraph 2, pp.1-2)

As the Law 3374 implies (Article 2, paragraph 1, pp.2-3), the evaluation of higher education institutions is carried out in two stages: the self-evaluation, where the evaluation is performed by the academic units themselves in connection with their mission and objectives; and the external evaluation, where the evaluation is performed by a committee of experts which also takes into consideration the self-evaluation report of each department. “The evaluation procedures pertaining to higher education institutions are coordinated and supported at a national level by the independent administrative authority entitled ‘Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education’ (HQAA), which is formed pursuant to the provisions of Article 10.” (Law 3374, Article 2, paragraph 4, p.3). The last few years some universities and Technological Education Institutes (TEI) have participated in quality evaluation procedures which have been held under the supervision of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European University Association.
It is of great importance to say that the conditions in Greece are better for activating quality evaluation procedures on a systematic basis.

The Department of Logistics Management was encouraged to self-assess without systematic approach; the assessment is rather empirical. The administrative units, the teaching staff of the department and the students responded well. The self-assessment data is used as references for continuous improvement, analyzing the evolution of activities, targets, goals and monitoring their progress. A self-assessment document defining its objectives and regulations set by the department consists of administrative and student data analysis and education, training, research and market links. An internal committee of the department, consisting of academics, administrators processed the questionnaire and analyzed data.

The purpose of the research is to raise questions that have not been asked to a great extent before, in the Greek education context, by:

- developing and implementing a pilot internal evaluation and Quality Assurance System for the Department of Logistics Management
- recording of existing situation with regard to the evaluation and Quality Assurance program of study in the Department of Logistics Management at Technological Education Institution in Thiva
- setting standards for internal quality assurance (assessment of students, quality assurance of teaching staff, learning resources and teaching support) within the education institution
- providing data to the Greek Agency of Quality Assurance (A.D.I.P), by evaluating the existing system and providing conditions moving towards reform
- utilizing the results for the design of an academic development for the department’s improvement and effectiveness

The objectives of the evaluation were to develop the framework for common quality criteria for comparative evaluations in higher education in Greece and to provide mechanisms for continuous improvement and cooperation among the institutes.

**Methodology**

According to the Law 3374 (Article 4, paragraph 1 & 2, p.6), self-evaluation which consists in the systematic assessment is a periodically repeated procedure which is performed by the members of teaching-research, educational and scientific staff and the students of each department by using questionnaires, interviews and any other suitable source of information. It reaches its completion with the preparation of the self-evaluation report. The self-evaluation procedure lasts two running semesters throughout questionnaires that are filled out by the students on a voluntary basis, anonymously, and without any prior notice in the framework of the compulsory courses offered during the semester. Also, all professors teaching courses in the Fall 2007 and Lent 2008 semesters at TEI were selected from the Department of Logistics Management and they agreed to participate.

It would be interesting to refer to the formal types of evaluation in the Department of Logistics Management. Ad hoc student feedback: the findings emerged by the questionnaires completed by the students pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses in the course, textbooks, reading material, teaching staff, and teaching methods, as well as questionnaires completed by the teaching staff concerning teaching goals, teaching materials and resources and their research work. The collection of data, the choice of methods and the analysis of data are all
linked. Since the purpose of the study is descriptive, so as to portray the challenges and prospects of quality assurance in Greek higher education reality, the researchers’ strategy was based upon qualitative and quantitative research methodology. Research tools include questionnaires filled in by the students attended the course and the teaching staff, so as the aim of the study to be fulfilled.

Given the small sample used in this study, we recognize the limits of generalizing the findings to larger populations. The findings of this study, however, provide a greater understanding of the issues emerged in previous parts of our research. The findings also set the stage for more ambitious explorations in the field of management.

**Quality Evaluation from the Students**

The academic unit which is subject to evaluation appointed a self-assessment committee which consists of members of the teaching-research staff with internationally recognized scientific work. It is responsible for carrying out the self-evaluation procedure at the department, monitors filling out of the questionnaires, informs the academic unit’s bodies about the responses and results and collects all the relevant data. Processing all the above mentioned, it draw upon the academic unit’s self-evaluation report. “[Evaluation] is often a process of collecting and using information about the perceived effectiveness of teaching and about the teaching performances of professors. It can also be a means of reviewing the supportiveness of the learning environment.” (Macpherson et al., 2000, p.231)

The questionnaires given to the students were based on the ADIP Students’ Questionnaire on Course and Teaching Evaluation. The self-evaluation questionnaire is drawn in accordance to the evaluation criteria and indices of the Law 3374, Article 3, paragraph 1. The questionnaire pertains mainly to the quality and means of teaching, teaching methodology, course material, tutors’ performance, their cooperation with the teaching staff, the structure and the content of the studies and their expectations from their studies.

**Quality Evaluation from the Teaching Staff**

Moreover, the questionnaires given to the teaching staff were based on the ADIP Tutors’ Questionnaire on Course and Teaching Evaluation. The department’s self-assessment committee has been collecting data through questionnaires, examining curriculum profile, quality of teaching process, students’ assessment, success rates, relation to the job market, organization, involvement of staff and students, teachers’ effectiveness, research programs, their academic qualities and research work. It took the initiative to establish a pilot quality assurance evaluation in order to suggest a critical evaluative analysis of the course, as well as set the implementation of the objectives under assessment; and to promote quality assurance principles.

**Findings of the Self-Evaluation Procedure**

There is an increasing interest in quality and standards reflecting the growth of higher education. The purpose of the standards is to provide guidance to higher education institutes in developing their quality assurance systems and agencies. The framework of quality criteria presented in this article is based on a literature review and is a presentation of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance within Higher Education Institutions (ENQA, 2007). In addition, “performance indicators allow an objective measurement and comparability of quality, which are important to government. They are regarded as useful
tools both for accountability purposes and in informing policy and decision making.” (Kis, 2005, p.18).

The European standards and guidelines of internal quality assurance agencies have formed the basis of the self-evaluation process. In accordance with the European standards, the key elements of this report are a self-evaluation by the Department for the evaluation of Higher Education. The committee conducted a self-evaluation analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the past and present evaluation system and the evaluation procedures and processes. This pilot self-evaluation was designed to fulfill two aims: to provide documentation to be used by the ENQA as well as to stimulate discussions about this area of interest in order to ensure continuous improvement.

According to the European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions, policy and procedures for quality assurance, monitoring of programmes, students’ assessment, quality of the teaching staff, learning resources, the availability of the necessary infrastructure and administrative services are involved.

Higher education institutions have a policy and procedures concerning the assurance of quality. To achieve this, the Technological Education Institute of Thiva has developed and implemented a strategy for continuous enhancement of quality. Department of Logistics Management of TEI in Thiva launched a pilot project which was designed and carried out in accordance with a set of guidelines outlined by the ENQA. Self-evaluation is a crucial element in most evaluation procedures. The aim of self-evaluation is to assure that the institution meets the responsibility for the quality of the programme offered and to guarantee students, employers and society that the Department of Logistics Management has to undergo a quality assurance procedure before it is approved.

The evaluation is formative, based on qualitative judgement, depending on data and indicators and concluding with recommendations. “The evaluation with a formative function is oriented towards the improvement of actions, to better structure and the processes, and to change what is not working.” (Gola, 2004, p.25)

**Quality of Tuition & Curriculum**

**Monitoring and Periodic Review of The Programme**

Mechanisms for the approval, monitoring and periodic review of the programmes the department offers are evident. According to ENQA (2007), “the quality assurance of programmes and awards [include]: the development and publication of explicit intended learning outcomes; careful attention to curriculum and programme design and content; […]; availability of appropriate learning resources; monitoring of the progress and achievements of students; […]” (p.17) As far as the quality of tuition is concerned, the efficiency of the teaching staff, the quality of the teaching process, teaching aids, learning resources, the availability of infrastructures, the students and teachers ratio and cooperation are all evaluated.

Researching the teaching process, the question on teaching effectiveness came to the surface. Teaching is systematically evaluated. The evaluation is held through receiving feedback from students. The resources for the support of student learning are adequate. What emerged by a high rate of the respondents is the perception that the teaching staff of the Department of Logistics Management is efficient. More specifically, the 81% of the
respondents believed that the teaching performance is effective as the tutors organize their lesson according to their schedule and the curriculum standards. They also motivate their students to participate in class and they are punctual in their classes and in the prompt correction of the students’ assignments. Students to a great extent (90%) connect the tutorials with their success in the assignments as tutors give them guidelines for a better performance, as well as their success in the exams, because they have the opportunity to clarify any queries emerged on taught material. A significant number (67%) mentioned their failure in the exams which led to resit the exams due to their insufficient study and not to the tutors’ ineffective teaching methods. The majority of the students portrayed the teaching process in a way of diagnosing teaching effectiveness and a way of improving their own performance and learning outcomes.

It is of great importance to state Curriculum as the basis of evaluation. Curriculum experts are responsible for continuously monitoring educational quality of each programme. It is their responsibility to discuss the objectives of the course and approve examination methods and instructional methods. As for the quality of curriculum, the degree to which curriculum meets the academic unit’s objectives and society’s demands, the cohesion and applicability of the curriculum are evaluated. In addition to the above, Universities are entitled to define their curricula autonomously. TEIs determine their curricula which are assessed by the Institute of Technological Education under the Ministry of Education. Curricular relevance to market needs is a very important issue and touches on research and staff planning.

According to the students’ responses on whether the teaching material is well organized and meets the goal of the modules, the results are satisfactory. 84% of the students who completed the questionnaire responded positively to the curriculum relevance and the quality of the teaching aids.

The aims and the organization of the programme comply with relevant legalization and they are also formulated in consideration of the needs and requirements of the labour market. The content of the programme is appropriate to the needs and the aims of the programmes. The competences are expressed both in terms of academic contents and in terms of practical applications and they reflect academic principles that comply with awarded degree and they are realistic in relation to the duration of the programme. The teaching and learning methods reflect the aims of the programme and its academic principles. Throughout the students questionnaires, 82% of the students agreed that the quality of the teaching process and the teaching methods used have rather surprising results. This high rate of respondents stated that the teaching methods used are learner based and communicative so as to enhance the quality of the teaching procedure.

As far as the examination methods are concerned, they clearly reflect the academic and didactic principles and they are in accordance with the achievement of the intended competencies of the programme.

**Quality of Research Work**

According to the ENQA (2007)

*Teachers are the single most important learning resource available to most students. It is important that those who teach have a full knowledge and understanding of the subject they are teaching, have the necessary skills and experience to transmit their
knowledge and understanding effectively to students in a range of teaching contexts, and can access feedback on their own performance. (p.18)

According to the Law No 3374, Article 3, paragraph 1b, the quality and effectiveness of research work, scientific publications, research programs acknowledgment of the research by third parties are mentioned. Based on the tutors’ questionnaires, among 25 university tutors, there are 61 papers on research journals and conferences in which some references from other researchers have been done. Eight tutors are also participating in research programmes which run in their education field. In addition, teachers’ qualifications reflect the aim of the programme and their teaching competency which reflects learning outcomes contribute to the development of the subject area.

Quality of Administrative Services, New Technologies & Learning Resources and Student Support

As to the quality of administrative services, the use of new technologies and the department’s cooperation with other educational institutions are part of the evaluation criteria and constitute an indirect part of the performance indicators. The administration office as well as the administration assistant office runs in an effective way as both remain open for students and teachers services as long as the teaching sessions are held. The facilities support the development of teaching and research and they are sufficient to implement the aims of the programme.

Learning Resources and Student Support

The resources that are available for the support of the students are adequate and appropriate for the programme offered. Students use the library and computing facilities in order to assist their learning. The new technology, infrastructures (new buildings) provide an efficient working and learning environment. As far as the library facilities are concerned, 86% responded that the available bibliography is adequate. Similarly to the above, 84% mentioned the importance of the computing facilities, as there is sufficiency of computers for the students. It is of great importance to add that the teaching material of all modules in the curriculum is provided through the platform e-Class. The e-learning platform, e-Class, is a completed system of electronic courses management and it also constitutes the proposal of Academic Internet GUNet for the support of asynchronous tele-education (Tilekpaideysis). The learning resources and any other support mechanisms are designed taking into account their own needs and they are also easily accessible to students.

The European dimension in Higher Education is promoted through the initiatives developed in the institutes; through the participation of the institutes in European educational co-operation programmes (Socrates, Leonardo Da Vinci, etc), studies can be offered in cooperation to institutes abroad and any other European programmes and projects, as well as research cooperation with other academic units in Greece.

Careers Advisory Service

Students often develop particular interests during their studies which they would like to use in the choice of a postgraduate degree or even in their first job. It is therefore very important if they have clearly defined and specialise objectives not to leave thinking about their future until the end of the programme. Facilities include one-to-one discussions with experienced careers advicers, each specializing in particular subject areas. These discussions
provide insights onto self-assessment, a range of opportunities and how to implement choices. Students are welcome to visit the Centre at any time to browse through, and in some cases take away, information about careers, employers and vacancies. The Careers Advisory Service works closely with recruiters and many employers organize presentations and interviews. The Career Service is available to the students throughout the course and will be pleased to assist at any stage during their time at TEI.

International Educational Programmes- International Relations Office (IRO)

The TEI of Chalkida participates actively in European inter-University and University-Industry exchange and training programmes such as ERASMUS and LEONARDO. Through these E.U. sponsored programmes, students and academics have the opportunity to exchange educational, cultural and social experiences. The International Relations Office of the TEI of Halkida is the coordinator of this activity on a full-time basis. As for the International Relations Office (IRO), it provides information on European and other International programmes and deals with incoming and outgoing students. Upon arrival at the TEI all international students are advised to contact the international Relations Office in the TEI where they can find helpful information and service with regard to their accommodation, financial or study issues.

Assessment of Students

Effective assessment can play a vital role in diagnosing learning progress and improving and enriching teacher performance and achieving and maintaining academic standards. Students’ assessment is carried out during the semesters throughout testing, examinations, academic projects and assignments and presentations. “Assessment […] provides valuable information for institutions about the effectiveness of teaching and learners’ support. Student assessment procedures [are designed] to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and other programme objectives; be appropriate for their purpose […]”(ENQA, 2007, p.17) Students are clearly informed about the assessment strategy and methods being used for their course as well as the criteria that are applied to the assessment of their performance.

Undoubtedly, the primary purpose of an educational institution is to enable learning. A learning process is designed to take place within the universities which are accountable for the nature and the quality of the learning. Assessment drives learning through motivation. Assessment informs students about the real goals of a course. “Assessment has a powerful effect on motivation and most valuable are well designed formative assessments. Assessment should play a positive role in motivating students to strive towards the explicit learning outcomes [and] guide learning.” (Ibtesam Halawah, 2006, pp.189-190) Comparing to traditional closed examinations, continuous assessment can be thought as a factor that controls motivation for learning, encouraging and supporting students to pursue their goals.

According to the course tutors questionnaire, students showed a lower performance to pure sciences courses, such as Statistics I, Mathematics, Financial Accounting, than to the core specialised courses on their field of education, such as Operational Research, English Terminology, Supply Chain Management, Warehousing Management, Distribution Systems and Transportation, Management Information Systems (MIS) etc. The success rates are due to the projects that were assigned to the students which contributed to their final results. In analysing students’ assessment and learning, an issue of great importance for discussion is learning outcomes. Undoubtedly, learning outcomes influence to a greater or lesser extent
students satisfaction and more precisely their competency in their academic field. Effectiveness in the learning outcomes will assist them indirectly to their potential employability, as they are coherent to reality.

Assessment, taking place throughout the learning process, motivates learners to continue trying for their improvement and provides feedback of their learning. When learners receive feedback on work performance, they will possibly increase their expectancies concerning their development. At this point it is essential to mention that “people work at their best when they are achieving the greatest satisfaction from their work.” (Everard and Morris, 1996, p.21)

Assessment Methods

The findings (100% of respondents) show clearly that assessment transparency is evident in our department. At TEIs, students are evaluated via the final exam and one more optional form of assessment. More specifically course assessment consists of:

- The final exam which counts for 60% or 100% of the final grade.
- The optional coursework project which counts for 40% of the final grade.

The final exam is compulsory; students are free to choose whether they wish to do the optional coursework in order to add points to their final grade. Students who wish to do an extra-credit project have the opportunity to work on an assignment individually or as being part of a team. Team work projects in relation to presentations provide them with the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills gained during the course in front of an audience they know well, their colleagues. This “hands on” experience will give students a first taste of what it means to make a presentation and also offers them the opportunity to see various things in practice.

Undoubtedly, the findings contribute in a number of ways to the understanding of the issue of quality assurance in Greek higher education. As the data are based in a Department of an education institution, further research would be necessary to confirm or contradict any hypothesis regarding the impact of the outcomes of higher education.

Recommendations and Prospects for The Future

Logistics Department leads the way in introducing quality assurance according to the guidelines of ENQA for departmental self-evaluation through its three years of experience with the institutional policy. Throughout its self-assessment the quality assurance principles show how they can affect curriculum and the overall institutional reputation. Whilst it is clear that there have been major advances in the quality of education institutions. It is also worth noting that the interface between quality, effectiveness, improvement and policy making is proving to be a productive one. Policy makers will become more aware of the complexities of judging institutional effectiveness and initiate change as they appreciate the insights of the effectiveness knowledge base. Although this field is still limited by shortages of research and trained researchers, the prospects seem more promising than at any time-to-date.

Proposals and recommendations are of great importance after having implemented an evaluation process. Proposals enhance the quality assurance agencies to increased transparency in higher education and may lead to a great extent to education institutions’ recognition and credibility in an increasingly competitive environment. We could say that Greek institutes may perceive an added value in submitting themselves to evaluation. ENQA
should be asked by the Greek Government to provide recommendations that will lead to the establishment of a national accreditation system and practices that will meet the European standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area (EHEA) and ensure appropriate academic and management structures for implementing adequate quality assurance practices.

Notwithstanding the above, we would highly recommend for the improvement of TEIs the establishment of simulation programmes in core modules which are directly related to the course. In the Department of Logistics Management, it has already been decided the simulation programmes to take place in the following modules Warehouse management, Distribution Net and Transportation, where the theoretical background will be implemented into practice. Throughout this innovation programme, workshops will be developed and the students will have the opportunity to understand how a warehouse operates. Furthermore, one of the most striking examples is that students were encouraged to create a transportation net system for a virtual enterprise.

It would be beneficial to the students’ performance the coursework that is assigned to the students to be compulsory in order to add points to their final grade. In this way, students will also have the opportunity to work on an assignment individually or as being part of a team, as well as they will be aware of the international bibliography and literature review on their field. Moreover, team work projects in relation to presentations provide them with the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills gained during the course in front of an audience they know well, their colleagues. This “hands on” experience will give students a first taste of what it means to make a presentation and also offers them the opportunity to see various things in practice. Taking into account the benefits of continuous assessment, tutors at the Department of Logistics Management have realized the importance of incentives in the efficient learning process. As a result of the students’ effective performance in team work projects, the most well written assignment is rewarded by giving the opportunity to the students to present their findings at the annual conference which is held at TEI.

As it is emerged by the students’ questionnaires, the distribution of the learning material is quite ineffective, due to bureaucracy. In many cases, the books are distributed to the students in the middle of the semester, and as a consequence it can be an obstacle to the effective teaching and learning procedure.

Another issue that must be improved is the procedure for the optional courses that are offered in each department. It has been observed that students do not have the necessary knowledge in advance, before making a choice for an optional module. It is proposed the Technological Education Institutes to facilitate the optional module’s choice process by informing them about each module, its aims and objectives, content and assessment methods. In this way, course tutors who will inform the students for the optional courses that are provided for each academic semester, in advance. The students, being aware of the modules’ objectives, will make the best possible choice in relation to their own interests and research field.

As a conclusion, we could mention that higher education institutions are regarded as the primary source of knowledge and they have a vital role in achieving Europe’s objective of becoming competitive knowledge-based economy in the world. Since the Bologna Declaration, countries have taken important steps to fulfill its objectives for the development of national qualifications framework and effective quality assurance mechanisms leading to the international attractiveness of European higher education sector, creating compatibility of
different education systems and enhancing the quality of higher education. Governments should promote a climate of self-assessment within higher education and universities should be encouraged to monitor their own performance. Institutions should undertake student evaluation of teaching, develop special projects for their improvement and offer internal awards for teaching excellence. Institutions should enter into relationships with other Greek or international higher education institutions to facilitate staff exchanges, collaboration in research and benchmarking of course standards.

This would lead to the improvement of efficiency and effectiveness and an increased awareness of accountability. All higher education institutions should develop an annual quality assurance and improvement plan as an integral part of the institution’s planning process, including its goals, strategies and outcomes. In addition, the Department of Logistics Management aspires to implement a quality assurance evaluation to the 300 newcomer students for the next academic year in order to compare data for the department’s improvement.

Conclusion

Quality Assurance is placing new demands on higher education institutions as innovation policy becomes more comprehensive (OECD, 2007). Throughout several studies, we have seen that quality assurance systems have caused institutions to give a greater attention to the issues concerning effective teaching and learning; institutional management has improved; strategic planning has been strengthened; and educational programs have been more responsive to changing needs. “Educational assessments are often rather naively expected to serve the role of a kind of impartial barometer of educational quality. Such an expectation makes assessment results of particular interest and value to policy makers of various stripes.”

Quality assurance in higher education within Europe is designed to ensure that higher education institutes and its stakeholders gain benefits from the evaluations held and the procedures in their education systems can be benchmarked against best systems internationally. We should encourage universities to implement institutional evaluation so as their quality assurance policy and their strategic management to be improved on a continuous basis. Universities should carry out their own internal evaluation in order to provide documentation required for the evaluation process. Technological Educational Institutions (T.E.I) supported the introduction of quality assurance mechanisms in a project to improve standards in public institutions. The development and implementation of a pilot internal evaluation procedure for undergraduate students in the Logistics Department at TEI of Thiva, contribute to improving accountability and developing data with comparative information about the performance of institutions in higher education.
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