



Quality, management and governance in Portuguese higher education institutions

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1 INTRODUCTION

Context for governance in Portuguese higher education institutions

How institutional management and governance arrangements impact on quality and quality assurance mechanisms of higher education?

Part of a wider European research programme - IBAR

A **lot** on the changing face of governance and management in higher education (Amaral et al. 2003; Braun and Merrien 1999; Rhoades 1992; Bleiklie and Kogan 2007; de Boer et al. 2008)

Less on the relationship between changing governance structures and developments in quality in higher education (Salter and Tapper 2002)

2 THE CHANGING FACE OF GOVERNANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

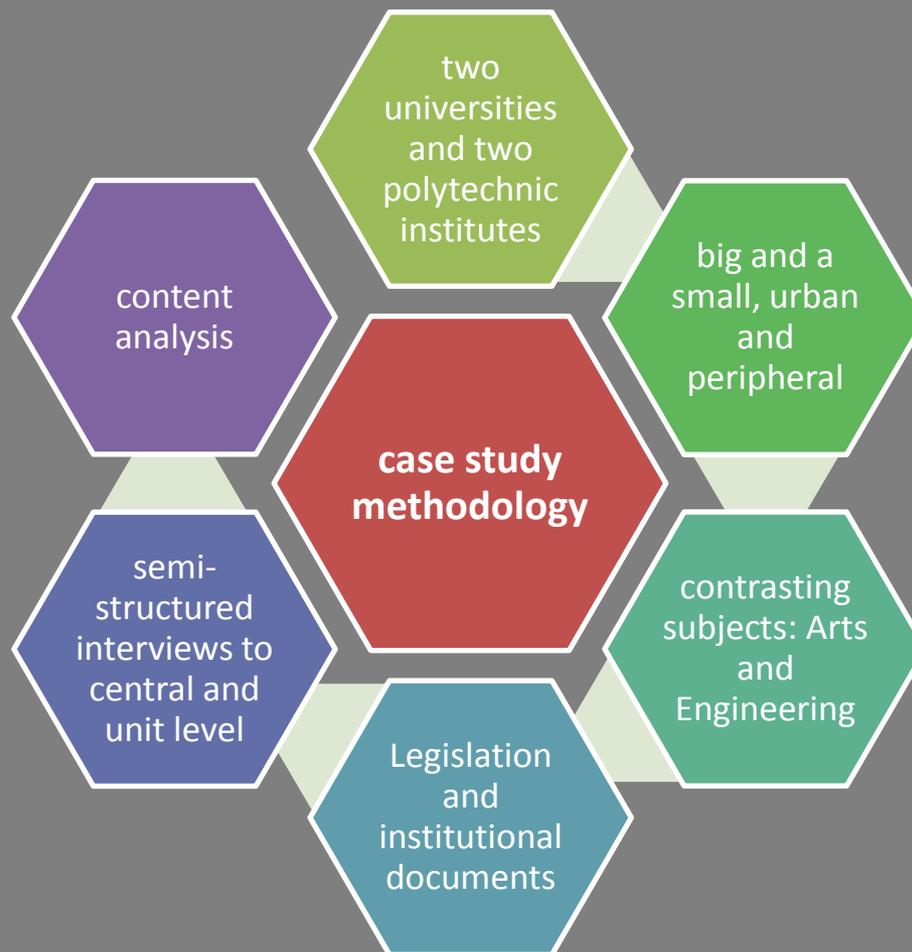
Review of the Portuguese higher education system by the OECD (2007), and a review of the quality assessment system by ENQA (2006)

Different balance between improvement and accountability in relation to quality and between bottom-up and top-down approaches to decision making (Rosa et al. 2006)

Institutions are now supposed to develop a quality assurance policy, a quality culture, and a strategy for continuous improvement (Rosa and Sarrico 2012)

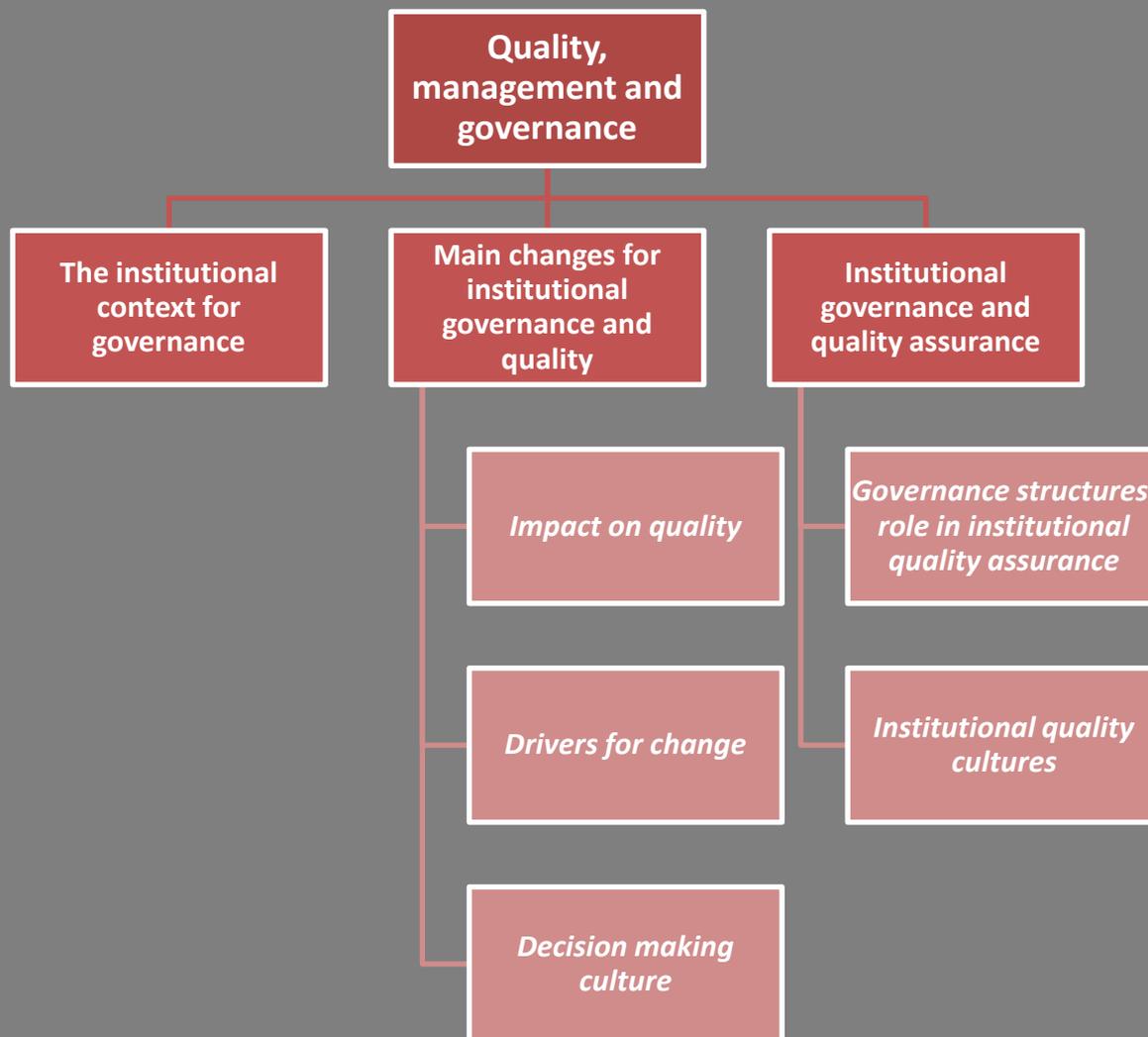
Enhancement of management structures vis-à-vis to collegial ones, centralization of decision-making, and significantly increase of the participation of external stakeholders (Amaral et al. 2011; Magalhães et al. 2012)

Relationship between governance and quality in Portuguese higher education institutions: how institutional governance arrangements impact on quality and quality assurance mechanisms of higher education?



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FINDINGS



4.1 THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT FOR GOVERNANCE

Change in legislation: RJES, A3ES, new institutional statutes

The pressures of the market: financial distress, earned income...

Mixed effects:

- 😊 Strategic direction
- ☹️ Tension between managerial and collegial values

Results:

- More accountability
- More unified institutions
- Intermediate coordination bodies
- More negotiation between the centre and the units

4.2 MAIN CHANGES FOR INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY

4.2.1 Impact on quality

Significant impact on quality

A3ES has had a positive impact on quality

A3ES emboldens the internal authority

Formalisation of institutional quality assurance mechanisms

Central role of information systems

Emphasis on administrative and management procedures

A lot to be done on teaching and learning

A3ES is helping develop the latter

4.2 MAIN CHANGES FOR INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY

4.2.1 Impact on quality (continued)

External stakeholders: more accountability, more managerial values

Increased pressure for data

Professionalisation of quality staff

Formalisation of institutional quality assurance mechanisms

Students often seem to be alienated from governance bodies

Centralisation and standardisation

Struggling with follow-up

Tensions and trade-offs that at times have positive and other times negative effects on quality

4.2 MAIN CHANGES FOR INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY

4.2.2 Drivers for change

Change derives both from the **external** and **internal** contexts

The changes in the **external** framework are often an opportunity to an **internal** change agenda

Institutional **information systems** seen as tool for change, as an integrative mechanism

Information systems seen in a favourable light by both the centre and the units (often, for different reasons)

4.2 MAIN CHANGES FOR INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY

4.2.3 Decision making culture

Balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches

- Increased formal elements of top-down
- Informal elements of bottom-up

Intermediate, hybrid situation regarding decision making culture affecting the quality of teaching and learning

Centralisation and standardisation of everything 'non-academic'

Traditional collegial bodies for 'academic' matters (scientific and pedagogic)

Danger: quality matters often removed from the academic endeavour

4.3 INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

4.3.1 Governance structures' role in institutional quality assurance

Lecturers are deemed to be individualistic and to find it hard to work in teams

However, it is tough to take decisions against the body of academics

Third mission, despite increased external stakeholder representation, is still very much an ad-hoc activity, even if widespread

Hybrid of top-down and bottom-up features in decisions of quality matters

- Top-down for formalisation and systematisation
- Bottom-up for pedagogic matters and improvement initiatives

4.3 INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

4.3.2 Institutional quality cultures

Informal quality culture, but evidence of increasing formalisation

Increased culture of responsibility, transparency, accountability and performance

Limited improvement culture

Quality seems less of an intrinsic and more of an extrinsic motivation

However, the external pressure is producing more of a reflective and improvement culture

Traditional individualistic culture of academics remains, but a more collective quality culture is being developed

Different degrees of hybridisation in terms of top-down and bottom-up decision making cultures regarding quality

Tension is seen as a good arrangement, as it provides the necessary checks and balances in decision making processes

CONCLUSIONS

Institutions are walking the path...

Governance reform as an opportunity to raise the awareness of quality assurance;

Governance reform inducing the centralisation of quality management activities;

The presence of external stakeholders promotes the development of reporting mechanisms to improve decision-making processes;

Governance structures and processes created appear to have increased bureaucracy;

The existence of hybrid decision-making cultures, top-down and bottom-up, to cope with coordination difficulties;

External evaluation processes conducted under the framework of A3ES have impact on the reorganisation of structures and processes;

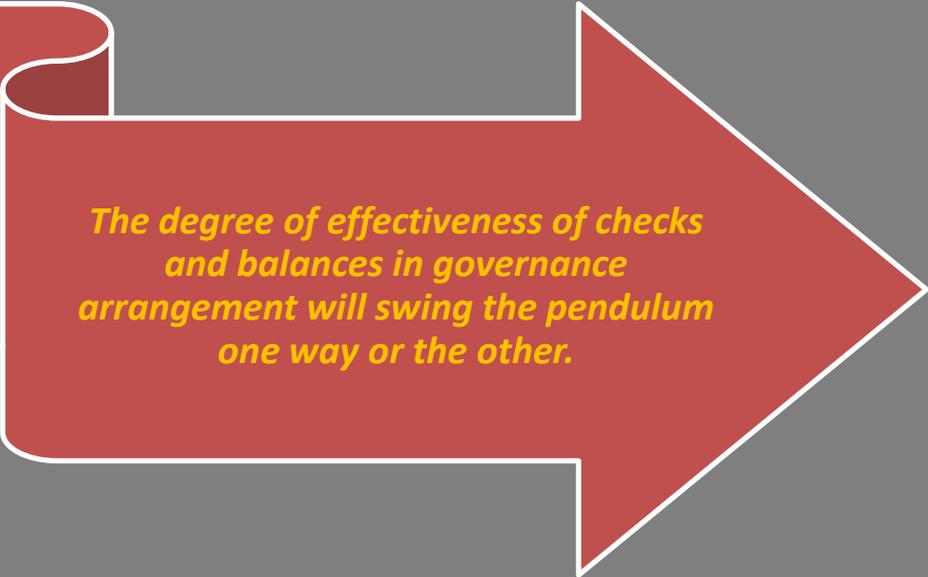
Institutional quality cultures vary across disciplines, but institutions find it hard to acknowledge this in their quality assurance systems;

Development of information and communication systems appears to be central for quality assurance.

CONCLUSIONS



The implementation of policy and procedures for quality assurance should be read in context. National and institutional features will either hinder or foster the implementation of policy and procedures regarding quality.



The degree of effectiveness of checks and balances in governance arrangement will swing the pendulum one way or the other.