

IBAR Seminar: Warsaw School of Economics

Session 1 Friday 14th September 2012

1. Report on WP10: Jakub Brdulak

Introduction: teaching and quality in ESG

ESG Standard 1.4: Quality assurance of teaching staff

What is defined by law? What is defined by HEIs? (e.g. contracts, working conditions, salary levels, qualifications, professional bodies, contact hours, number of students per teacher, recruitment process, rules on consultancy or working in different organisations/institutions, promotion criteria, probation). Is there tension between national/legal requirements and local institutional policies? What freedoms to universities enjoy? Is legislation enabling or restricting? How can institutions build on the minimum standards required to law to develop better quality?

Information about early Polish results and challenges based on Polish data

Staff recruitment and appointment: findings and barriers in Poland.

- Salary of teachers leads to “negative selection” of people who fail in industry.
- Assessment of HEIs based on research criteria rather than teaching quality, affecting local promotion criteria.
- As staff are promoted, teaching hours tend to decrease.
- Lack of clarity in some HEIs about level of responsibility for recruitment of teachers: are institutional policies in conflict with local (departmental) priorities and concerns?
- Unclear whether competition for positions creates good quality teaching staff.
- Recruitment of experts from industry is controversial and there are no procedures or legislation to guide practice.

In general, there are widespread doubts about the abilities and competence of teachers in Polish universities as they relate to national policy: there is a feeling that national policy isn't delivering a high quality workforce in line with ESG.

Support for teaching performance: findings and barriers from Poland

- No requirements in law to provide training for teaching, but examples of local good practice.
- European funds used to cover some aspects of teaching staff development (e.g. study visits).
- European funds used to modernise equipment.
- Differing levels of initiative amongst individual teachers (e.g. some seek out their own professional development), differing opportunities in departments/faculties etc.
- No universities had development strategy: activities only linked to availability of (external) funds.

How is the quality of teaching assessed: findings and barriers from Poland.

- Relationship between legal requirements and institutional assessment policy can create tension.

- Basic tools for teacher assessment are not always fit for purpose.
- Using the results for improvement is often a problem.

Motivation and building a quality culture: findings and barriers from Poland.

- Financial and non-financial motivations: salaries are low and not much evidence of intrinsic motivation systems. Some things defined by law (e.g. training for PhDs).
- Limited evidence of institutional attempts to build motivation or quality cultures.
- Certain hunger to find out more about how quality cultures are developed in other systems.
- Examples of good practice.

How are teachers motivated? What does it take to be a good teacher?

This was conducted as a questionnaire to academic staff in Poland. Findings and barriers in Poland:

- No one referred to ESG or other external factors.
- Everyone referred to internal intrinsic factors.
- Transmission of external activities to internal motivation wasn't noted (e.g. training to become a better teacher).
- Reference to “traditional” values but not to institutional activities to develop teachers.

My comment in the session: these questions are designed to solicit personal responses. I think we would be better served by asking a different set of questions: perhaps something like “how has your university helped you to develop as a teacher”? We discussed as a group the possibility of turning these high level research questions into a different format to reduce cognitive dissonance and to improve the dataset.

Alberts asked whether we should also ask students these questions. Ewa reported that she does not intend to use these questions for the comparative report, but would find the data useful for completion of her chapter for the IBAR book. As a team, we might usefully discuss how to deal with this “soft” data.

Expectations regarding national reports for WP10

The Polish team presented the format for the national reports with suggested word counts etc.

There was some discussion about whether we can extend the deadline for the delivery of the report for WP10. A number of national teams asked for a short extension of two weeks (to end November 2012). This would certainly help the UK team. The Polish team asked that, if it was possible, they would still prefer a deadline of 15th November, but a short extension is acceptable if required.

2. Report on final results of WP8: Portuguese team

Major findings and barriers:

- Poor evidence of link between governance structures/design and ESG priorities.
- Low awareness of ESG.
- Evidence of misalignment of national initiatives and local decision-making priorities or potential for perverse effects from national initiatives.
- Tensions at both national and institutional levels between top-level activities and

development of quality cultures.

Good practice and recommendations:

- Highly institution and nation state specific practice in evidence
- Participation of students in decision-making widely recognised as good practice
- Sometimes “good practice” can turn into a barrier if checks and balances don't operate well (getting balance right is important).
- Students increasingly seen as customers or clients of governance activities
- Admin and management staff are driving changes to quality management by overseeing institution-wide processes (e.g. student surveys) and are key actors in quality processes.
- Coping and managing with these tensions through balanced governance arrangements might be seen as good practice in itself.

3. Report of early comparative results of WP9: Dutch team

Don reported general findings as follows.

Firstly: who are stakeholders?

- Uncontroversial categories of stakeholders reported included: students, employers
- Alumni perceived as less utilised
- Professional bodies in some systems indistinguishable from industry
- Academic community (e.g. external examiners)
- Government: some problems with defining military stakeholders (are they government or professional bodies)
- Society at large
- “Unspecified”

UK seen as an outlier because in our report we talk about soliciting stakeholder “viewpoints” rather than securing stakeholder representation. There is a suspicion that this language comes from the QAA guidelines, but offers some interesting questions about the status/meaning of stakeholder identity and roles. My hunch is that this has something to do with securing actionable plans. Don is likely to come back to us for more clarification on this point. In the Netherlands, formal representation is more recognised.

Other aspects of stakeholder engagement are pretty much universal: student questionnaires etc. One big question emerging is how universities can engage effectively with SMEs.

We will be asked further questions for clarification shortly, answers must be complete by 5th October 2012.

3. Introduction to WP11: Slovakian team

The final version of the questions for WP11 on information and quality was agreed after the Enschede seminar. The final set of 6 questions relate to ESG 1.6 and 1.7 on information systems and public information.

Basic information on national and comparative report structure was presented, all of which is in line with the usual UK format for WP reports.

The Slovakia seminar is on the 17th -19th January 2013 with the main day 18th January 2013 and the deadline for national reports is 15th March 2013.

Dates for the subsequent seminar in March associated with WP12 were discussed and agreed as 3rd - 5th March 2013, with the main day of the meeting as Monday 4th March 2013. There is a lack of clarity right now about location – there is considerable enthusiasm for a meeting in Durham but Helena was very tentative about agreeing this today because of her concerns about the progress of the transfer. If Durham is problematic, the location is likely to be Prague.

4. Introduction to WP12: UK team

I presented the questions for WP12 and flagged up some methodological ideas for conducting the research. The UK team is provisionally planning a “snowball” model for the research design, using existing networks of contacts in UK universities, many of whom were identified as part of the work on WP6, Quality and Access. These linking individuals include access or widening participating officers, schools coordinators, marketing staff etc. First year tutors at universities (and final year tutors at schools) may also be helpful. One issue for the UK and for some other partners is how to deal with the question of non-school leaver entrants or entrants from non-UK schools. This remains open for now.

There followed a wide-ranging discussion about methodological concerns and issues around addressing WP12 and research into secondary schools. Each team spoke about concerns in their own national context. One clear issue is the perceived lack of links between the tertiary and secondary sectors, either at a legislative or operational level. Although this in itself constitutes a finding, ideally the research should aim to create actionable recommendations and so teams should consider identifying respondents who can identify the current situation in local contexts and who can make informed suggestions for improvements.

ACTION: CO to contact all partners to ask for brief description of methodology for WP12.

5. Report on management and administrative/financial issues: Czech team

- Helena reported on timely submission of the interim report.
- Helena reported on the progress of the transfer to Durham.
- Helena reported her concern about potential delay to second tranche of payment because of lack of financial data from the UK team and her expectation that this will be resolved in October.
- Helena reminded us that eligibility of expenditure will only be confirmed at the end of the project as part of the final reporting data, and that non-eligible costs can be removed from the project expenditure at that stage.
- Project evaluation will be undertaken by Bjorn Stensaker (University of Oslo) and Ellen Hazelkorn (Dublin Institute of Technology). The evaluators met at EAIR last week and have started their work, with the expectation that an initial draft will be available in October.
- It is likely that the project evaluation will be presented at the seminar in Slovakia in January.
- Helena requested information about project dissemination activities to put on the IBAR website.

ACTION: CO to collate UK dissemination activities and send to Helena.

Session 2 Saturday 15th September 2012

1. Dissemination

Claudia has secured a special edition of the *Journal of the European Higher Education Area* on IBAR. There is a feeling that we can create more policy-based, practitioner-oriented versions of papers for this practitioner-oriented journal rather than very scholarly articles. Seven papers have been commissioned: one paper per work-package (which will mean two papers for the UK team: one on access and one on secondary schools). We would have to create the papers before end of June 2013 for the issue being published at the end of 2013. Word limit is about 5000 words, articles can be shorter but not longer. Claudia will be guest editor for this special edition.

Book chapters for the IBAR book are due for delivery by end March. These chapters must be different, so there might be benefit in securing different authors for some journal articles. Book chapters are intended to be much more reflective and personal responses to the data/issue.

Heather reported her expectations for book chapters: outlines or first drafts are expected by January (with the possible exception of the chapter on WP12) and finished chapters by March. There will be an extended session to discuss the book at the seminar in Nitra in January.

I reported on the possibility of an IBAR session at the 2013 QAA Scotland conference and got a positive response.

ACTION: CO to develop session proposal for QAA Scotland conference.

Other conference possibilities for next year include CHER in Lausanne, EAIR, EAIE, Bologna Seminars etc. A number of other team members agreed to develop proposals and coordinate papers for these conferences. Jakub agreed to coordinate collation of a list of potential dissemination outlets.

Heather and I reported on our meeting with Professor Vera Dondur at the University of Belgrade regarding possible extension of IBAR to the Western Balkans. There was interest in this proposal from IBAR members and some discussion of Horizon 2020 funding opportunities and other possible funders. Jakub agreed to collate a list of potential funders for further projects.

2. Arrangements for the Slovakia Seminar

The Slovakian team reported on early arrangements for their seminar from 17-19 January 2013. There is some concern among team members about the timing and location of this seminar and a feeling that changing the venue to Bratislava might be sensible, given the potential for problematic weather in January.