

“Much Ado About Nothing?”

Evaluation of Learning and Teaching and its Consequences

Conference at the University of Rostock
September 6th-8th, 1998

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About these Proceedings

Dr. Sabine Teichmann
Philipp Busch

Much Ado About Nothing? The question formulated in the title of the meeting of the Conference of Rectors and Presidents of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions in Germany (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz – HRK) and the Consortium of Universities in Northern Germany was to give impetus to the discussion about the evaluation of studies and teaching and its follow-up. The question was first raised in practical evaluation work: in recent years, an increasing number of universities and other institutions for higher education have submitted their teaching subjects and degree courses to a process of internal and external evaluation. In its work, the Consortium of Universities in Northern Germany follows the Dutch model which forms the basis of the recommendations given by the HRK and the Council for Science and Research, of the tried and tested evaluation procedures of the Higher Education Information System (Hochschul-Informationssystem, HIS), and, to some extent, of the work performed by the Central Evaluation Agency (ZEvA) in Lower Saxony.

The evaluation procedure is time-consuming and labour-intensive. Using a comprehensive questionnaire-guide, those responsible for the different subjects taught must establish an evaluation report on the basis of a continuous internal dialogue. The evaluation report must present and reveal the actual situation in the study courses and in teaching. This analysis requires a lot of work to be performed by the working group charged with the evaluation of the subject. The same holds true for the external experts who invest a lot of time and work in their honourable job of analysing the subject taught on the basis of the evaluation report and must present their own assessments and recommendations in respect of the conditions and the situation in the study courses.

The question “Much Ado About Nothing”, which is raised again and again in view of the huge amount of work to be carried out, does by no means challenge the necessity of the procedure. Even before the new Framework Act on Higher Education was approved, there was agreement that evaluation for the purpose of ensuring quality in studies and teaching and for the

purpose of reporting to public opinion what is going on in higher education, was a necessary and reasonable exercise. It should be realized, however, that this question is aimed at the consequences, that is, the follow-up of evaluation: what is the real result of the evaluation effort, apart from the documents produced. This question was the starting point of the meeting held at the University of Rostock, in September 1998. The invitation of the HRK and the Consortium of Universities in Northern Germany had been followed by more than 150 representatives from university administrations, evaluation bodies and higher education political bodies. The meeting showed the place of evaluation in higher education policy and discussed two big groups of questions: evaluation and its follow-up as well as evaluation and accreditation.

The first subject was discussed in six working groups who dealt with different aspects of evaluation follow-up. Among other things, the participants discussed the importance of evaluation results on subject level, the possibilities of controlling the follow-up, using the example of the Dutch Inspectorate of Higher Education, and experiences gained in the implementation of evaluation results by means of contract management and target-oriented agreements. The participants also discussed subjects resulting from the process of evaluating studies and teaching: the development of general standards within the framework of metaevaluation; the improvement of the organization of and in establishments of higher education by means of evaluation, using the example of the Hamburg-based University for Economic and Political Sciences; and the relationship between evaluation and popular university rankings.

The second major item of the meeting was the question concerning the relationship between evaluation and accreditation with respect to (new) study courses. This problem was discussed from the point of view of the HRK and against the background of the experience gained in the US higher education system over many years. This point was also dealt with by the panel discussion.

These proceedings document the successful functioning of the meeting. They contain the papers, impulsive contributions, the summaries of the discussions, and the results of the final panel discussion. The proceedings also contain the theses concerning accreditation in degree courses at German institutions for higher learning, which were presented at the meeting by the Consortium of Universities in Northern Germany.

What the proceedings cannot show are the many informal contacts and discussions arranged outside the official framework of the conference. To continue the dialogue, the proceedings contain a list showing the addresses of all participants in the conference, as well as short biographies of the speakers.

Much Ado About Nothing? During the meeting, many speakers came back to this initial question again and again. They agreed that evaluation is an instrument which should be used under the responsibility of universities and other institutions for higher learning to ensure high levels of quality for studies and teaching for a long time ahead.

Introduction

Dr. Jürgen Lühje

This meeting is one of the first conferences held under the joint responsibility of the universities and the new “quality assurance” project of the Conference of Rectors and Presidents of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions in Germany (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz – HRK). The opinion-forming process at Germany’s institutions of higher education with respect to the subject of “evaluation” started in the early 1990s, later than in other countries. Who knew five or six years ago, at a time when the Consortium of Universities in Northern Germany made its first steps and when the Council for Science and Research and the European Rectors’ Conference implemented their pilot projects on the evaluation of studies and teaching, that the Dutch model of quality improvement and assurance in teaching and studies would be successful in Germany, too?

The experience gained in the field of evaluation in the meantime suffice to fill an entire conference. Nobody doubts the importance of Peer reviews and the benefit of exchanges of experience among those evaluated. What we are discussing now is how the results of evaluation should be used for the further development of higher education and which mechanisms of evaluation should be applied to the control of establishments of higher education. We should not blow our own trumpets, but I am really proud to say that the cooperation between the five North German universities during this period was a real success and that it is a highly interesting experience for all involved.

We have succeeded in learning and institutionalising new methods of quality assurance and improvement. Moreover, we have jointly developed the control mechanisms required for cooperation in a spirit of partnership between university administrations and departments, based on the respect for the other party’s responsibility, while determining the actions to be taken by both parties and controlling the results of such actions. In a society where the division of labour is largely based on “instruction” and “execution” or “voting in committees” patterns, target-oriented agreements like those concluded between the five universities of the North German Consortium require not only the acquisition of knowledge of institutional procedures, but also a new approach, another way of talking to each other, a thorough opinion-forming process, and the establishment of a practicable

“consensus”- I would like to use this opportunity for thanking (once again) Professor Dr. Müller-Böhlting (Centre for Higher Education Development – CHE) for the positive support he has lent to our efforts and the many recommendations he has given us with respect to the evaluation of experience and the creation of a “target agreement” concept.

In recent years, the Consortium of Universities in Northern Germany has been a place of learning for all involved. That is why I am very pleased that this tradition will be continued today and tomorrow. Those responsible for the policy of higher education in Germany should now start an opinion-forming process, mainly on the question of how study courses for obtaining the “Bachelor” and “Master” degrees should be organized. Our European neighbours have already initiated this process. Other questions we should also put on the agenda are: How can the diversity of degree courses be improved, and how can we ensure that university students can change over directly from their original degree courses to other universities or institutions for higher learning and other degree courses, without losing time ? Is it possible to introduce an accreditation system ? Will such system match the above-mentioned intentions better than the framework examination regulations used so far under the special conditions of government-funded establishments of higher education and a federal-state policy of education ? I think that we should use the second of our conference for discussing the subject of “accreditation”, the way of shaping such a accreditation system, as well as the relations and differences that should exist with respect to the methods of evaluation. As far as this subject is concerned, I am looking forward to what Charles Cook will tell us about the experience gained in New England, because we know that the USA have used accreditation systems for almost 100 years. Subsequently, the Consortium of Universities in Northern Germany will submit a number of theses in order to give fresh impetus to a lively discussion about accreditation and its application under German conditions.

German higher education politicians often say that the federal-state principle leads to provincialism, as reforms of university-level institutions in Germany start considerably later than in other European neighbouring countries. The opposite argument is that federalism protects German universities against a plethora of hasty reforms required by the central government. I think that this conference clearly shows that cooperation between universities is possible, even beyond national borders. Such cooperation can be very useful to reforms geared to the needs of

universities and other institutions of higher education and matching European and international standards in the field of higher education management. If we succeed in using the “quality assurance” project for the creation of an umbrella-type structure within the framework of the HRK, where representatives of universities can shape their opinion and reach a consensus, we could reduce the disadvantages resulting from a decentralised federal-state policy of higher education. If so, universities will show that they are independent organizations and extremely “fit for purpose”.

This conference could not have been convened without the financial support granted under the 3rd Special Higher Education Program. The conference can be held thanks to the excellent cooperation between representatives of different ministries, members of the advisory board of the “quality assurance” project under the HRK, and staff of higher education administration bodies and the HRK. I am sure that the conference will be successful because speakers of high reputation are investing their time and commitment and, last not least, because the 150 participants form a well-informed forum of discussion. Many thanks to all of you.

Evaluation and its consequences

On the practice of evaluation of courses and teaching

Professor Dr. Günther Wildenhain

The University of Rostock, together with the HRK and the Universities of Bremen, Hamburg, Kiel and Oldenburg – the Association of North German Universities – has organised a conference on the evaluation of courses and teaching, as well as on the subject of accreditation of courses. The subjects of the conference and its timing directly and indirectly reflect developments in the educational landscape of the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1990s: the situation of change in which the universities find themselves through the globalisation of the economy; the interests in the way that education is used which are developing at the universities themselves and which are also subject to external approaches; freedom of research and teaching which must be maintained despite all economic measures (does the person who gives the money also give the orders?); the drive for autonomy, transparency, recognition of services to the individual, society, and much more besides.

The fall of the Wall undoubtedly contributed to greater thought being given once again to education. But strong impulses to rethink social structures in many areas are, today, primarily the result of the liberalisation and internationalisation of the economy, as well as the transformation of the world of work, which is being given new contours: thus, professions are increasingly demanding an academic basis, including for specialist as well as for general qualifications. In this context, learning itself and studying become an important part of academic change; education is gaining in importance. Learning and knowledge are greatly valued. Rising demands are being made of the places of learning: the universities.

“Much ado about nothing”?

Evaluation of courses and teaching and its consequences – the motto of this conference is set very clearly, the question mark in the title more of a rhetoric device than anything else. Safeguarding quality standards, their further development and the drive associated with that to achieve the highest possible standards in teaching are important tasks of universities.

The Presidents and Rectors of the universities of Bremen, Hamburg, Kiel, Oldenburg and Rostock agreed to introduce and establish a procedure

which describes the quality of courses and teaching, and, on the basis of analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the department, to work towards the elimination of defects in the department on the one hand, and, on the other hand, consciously to expand its strengths and to use them to give the university a higher profile. The objective of the Association, then, is an evaluation which – designed to be discursive and oriented towards action – will lead to concrete steps in the teaching and study situation, while at the same time guaranteeing the necessary transparency in teaching and coursework- Formulated differently, I can also say that the purpose of the evaluation is to enable each subject to develop the quality of courses and teaching further, which also includes measuring the evaluated units against one's own targets-

So far, the Association of North German Universities has evaluated the following subjects: biology, German (1994/95), economics, computer studies (1995/96), chemistry, history (1995/96), English, geo-sciences, mathematics (1997/98)- The process is currently taking place in the subjects of education, physics and Romance studies. The University of Greifswald is involved, for the first time, in the evaluation of physics. Thus, more than 50 departments and institutes in 12 subject areas have taken part in the evaluation. By the year 2000 all common subjects in the Association of North German Universities are to have been evaluated.

From the perspective of the University of Rostock, the objective to have the whole range of subjects evaluated internally and externally by the end of the year 2000, can be implemented because evaluation is also taking place outside the Association with other partners. Thus, the subjects mechanical and electrical engineering are currently being evaluated at the University of Rostock. Both evaluations are based – like procedures in the Association of North German Universities – on the Dutch reference model. Here, the Electrical Engineering and Information Technology departments have been participating – together with the Dresden and Hamburg-Harburg technical universities – in a pilot project of the faculty conference since 1997. The Mechanical Engineering and Marine Engineering departments carried out an evaluation of courses and teaching at a European level with Swedish universities and the Hamburg-Harburg technical university. The stocktaking of the strengths and weaknesses of the courses and teaching, together with a detailed description of the associated classes was drawn up in English, In the meantime, the inspection of the commission of experts including representatives from major industrial enterprises ensued.

I have mentioned all of this because - looking back to 1994 - there have been enormous developments in the field of quality assurance and raising standards through and for departments. Against this background, time is to be set aside at this conference to exchange ideas about the various procedures, give stimulus and perhaps set new objectives.

In addition to the discussion about concrete procedures in the departments, we might also discuss the structural characteristic of evaluation. The procedure, which is firmly implemented in the Association of North German Universities, has the following structural characteristics, for example:

Evaluations

- extend over and above the Länder this eases the exchange of experiences and opinion-forming for co-operation among the universities;
- are carried out autonomously in the sense of being independent of the state. They are, of course, linked with current higher education policy discussions, their results flow into every higher education development at every university;
- students take part in significant numbers, i.e. both during self evaluation and during the assessment.
- The evaluation results in a contract between the management of the higher education institution and the department, in which the department decides voluntarily to implement the recommendations and the management of the higher education institution plays a supportive and guiding role in the further development of the course.
- does not only serve the functions of quality assurance and development, but also the function of rendering account.

Here, quality is seen not as a static but as a dynamic dimension. Quality is defined by the standards which apply in daily practice and which exist as a vision (strategic) in teachers and students. The attempt is thus made to keep to the principles of process-oriented evaluation by asking who tests what for which purpose, and who should draw the consequences. In the Association, the departments themselves check their practice in coursework and teaching. Through self-description and inspection they present themselves for evaluation by external assessors, draw consequences in those areas too where the recommendations are uncomfortable.

We will have the opportunity in the next two days to speak in detail about the procedure of internal and external evaluation, exchange experiences and

make improvements. We will deal with the consequences of evaluation at the various levels and will look at a subject which is forced upon us also by the new Framework Act for Higher Education: the accreditation of courses.

As Rector of the University of Rostock and as a member of the Association of North German Universities, I wish us – the participants, speakers, guests and organisers – success for the conference, progress in the subject matter, the raising of new questions and their concrete answers. Here I hope that the conference, with its highly topical issues, will bear fruit in persuading politicians to invest money in education and to have trust in the usability of university education. I also build on the commitment of my colleagues in seeking to improve teaching performance.

Education, training, research and the economy belong together; against this background there cannot be any “surfeit” of education. This awareness, too, should grow a little among all the participants. I hope that it succeeds, because I trust in the active participation of all.

Evaluation as a building block of an innovative higher education policy

Regine Marquardt

Welcome to the great hall of the ancient University of Rostock. My gratitude is due to the HRK and the Association of North German Universities who jointly organised this event: I am pleased that you chose the University of Rostock for this event in the programme of the HRK on the subject of quality assurance financed by the BLK. I hope that we, that is the Hanseatic city of Rostock and the Land of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, can prove that you made the right choice with this conference venue located on the Warnow near to the Baltic.

The conference venue of Rostock is not only the right choice on account of its attractive environment, but also on account of its substantive link to the conference topic of evaluation. The University of Rostock, as a member of the Association of North German Universities, can claim to play an important role in this association. Indeed, it is my impression that the north of the Federal Republic is taking a certain lead role in questions of evaluation precisely because of this Association of North German Universities which, in addition to the universities of Bremen, Hamburg, Kiel, Oldenburg and Rostock, has as its newest associate member the Ernst-Moritz-Arndt University in Greifswald.

The voluntary grouping of North German universities into this association, its activities and successes, lead me to contradict the provocatively phrased question “Much ado about nothing”? The evaluation association has worked on an element of higher education future on the quiet and there is much ado, to quote Shakespeare again, and it may even be a question of “to be or not to be”, for the results of evaluation may in future decide whether a department has a future or not. Evaluation is a key building block from which the innovative higher education policy of the future will be built. The Land of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern will introduce evaluation in accordance with the intentions of the legislators as binding for all. That must be done, for it cannot be right that it is up to a department whether it is willing to put itself to the test. Too much, as we will see, depends on the results of evaluation. But the obligation to take part in evaluation procedures is not intended to create fear among departments and is not due

to doubt in the teaching qualities of our professors. In Mecklenburg--Vorpommern, at least, there is no question about that for here, like in the other new federal states, the quality of teaching has traditionally taken a very high place, which can be seen, among other things, in the fact that more than 90% of students finished their courses in the allotted time.

So where does the reason for evaluation lie? Evaluation means assessing something, and assessment takes place because a statement is to be made about the quality of the product in comparison to the products of other suppliers. But statements about quality can only be made if measures exist, quality indicators, and the extent to which they are met can also be measured. The decree to which they are met is, in turn, determined by the optimum achievement of the objectives. We therefore have to be clear about the objectives of teaching at higher education level. If higher education institutions are to be, among other things, places of academically based vocational training, the achievement of objectives can, in the final instance, only be measured against the professional success of students. Does evaluation of higher education mean anything if it does not also provide information about whether or not graduates entered professions commensurate with their training and had successful careers? Or do we measure the quality of training by marks and pass rates? All of us know, after all, marks and such pass rates, in the first instance, say nothing at all about the quality of training itself unless the test measures in all study locations correspond. Quantitative aspects such as the number of first-year students, the number of students by subject semesters, graduates by subjects, age of graduates, length of specialist study, and duration of degree dissertation are certainly complimentary indicators but cannot be the decisive criteria for the quality assessment of a higher education training. That is why it is important to look at content with the so-called peer reviews, to ask experts and students and very important in my view follow the careers of our graduates.

For me, the aspects legitimisation, control and competition for quality rank equally in evaluation. Just as an effective evaluation must draw the consequences from its results, and this happens initially not at the level of the Land government but locally, requiring greater autonomy of higher education institutions, it is, conversely, equally true that greater autonomy of the higher education institutions demands transparent evaluation procedures in order to be able to legitimise that autonomy publicly, and provide society, to which higher education institutions alone owe a duty,

with information about their efficiency but also about their weaknesses, risks, and opportunities. This obligation to tell the unvarnished truth and adopt a self-critical approach is particularly strong in relation to applicant students who make a choice of existential proportions with their selection of higher education institution.

Evaluation has many interfaces to the key control and performance instruments. I would like to give some of them as examples: higher education financing, distribution of resources within the higher education institution, higher education structural planning, controlling, invoicing, quality assurance, its use of higher education reform, in particular the study and examination regulations and accreditation.

I have already pointed out that evaluation cannot be operated as *l'art pour l'art*, as self-reflection without consequences, but that it must bear fruit for the subject which has been evaluated, for the faculty and for the higher education institution as a whole. It would, however, be disastrous if departments had cause to fear a hanging judge behind every evaluation. And yet it cannot remain without consequences. Evaluation with the claim to honesty, strictness and the readiness to take consistent self corrective action set out here is the precondition and guarantee for the highest level of autonomy. To date, the tasks and distribution of competences in the relationship between state and the higher education institutions has been characterised by the state intervening primarily *ex ante* in the process of task performance. Here, it is significant that the institutional component of the higher education institutions produces state intervention and the claim to participation particularly in the budget, personnel, and organisation areas, for the state believes that this is the only way in which it can do justice to its direct responsibilities for this process. The position of the higher education institutions is equally clear, arguing, as they do, that the right to self-administration in academic affairs can only be implemented in the legal form of a body organised for its members, if the higher education institutions are also given greater institutional independence particularly in the areas named above.

The consequence for me of this, is that state regulations in future must be restricted to a greater extent to an administrative framework, that subject supervision clearly moves into the background in favour of legal supervision and, thereby, that process controlling measures by the state are clearly reduced. It is then up to the higher education institution to decide on

the best way to achieve the targets of efficiency, quality and economical operation in fulfilling its education task. Legitimisation towards the budget-giver then consists of evidence that these targets are being achieved. Divergent and wrong developments require corrective action. Such *ex post* management can only work with the assistance of reliable checking gradients which brings us back to evaluation.

In what follows, I would like to take a closer look at the evaluation and accreditation interface

“What is the purpose of accreditation?” we . who have got used to the state administrative framework for evaluation . ask ourselves more or less happily. We are dealing with the fixing of minimum standards and quality assurance in teaching. We are dealing with the comparability of final examinations as well as the accessibility of the higher education system. In the final instance, both the administrative framework as well as accreditation and evaluation serve the preservation of the high level of quality of our academic training. To this end, evaluation must be undertaken which goes far beyond the simple listing of examination subjects. Evaluation and accreditation is therefore the instruction to evaluate and safeguard standards, quality and compatibility together. Furthermore, for me, evaluation and accreditation are the two sides of one and the same coin. I can only accredit, that is recognise and certify, when I have previously checked the value that is evaluated.

Now it may at first appear confusing how a new course can be accredited when it first has to be checked and evaluated, something which can really only be done once the course has started, that is after the event. This objection would apply if it were true that evaluation were restricted to testing efficiency and quality only after a certain period has passed. But the term must be seen in a wider context, just like accreditation. On the one hand, accreditation will not be required just for new courses, but also increasingly for existing courses, and such accreditation will have to be renewed at regular intervals. On the other hand, evaluation is not restricted to stocktaking and follow-up support, but can also take the character of preliminary support. This involves testing course ideas for adherence to certain minimum standards – on which there is consensus in the department . as well as implementing these through existing facilities, existing staff and dedicated subjects, as well as by setting priorities.

Accreditation counts among the reasons for the amendment of the Framework Act for Higher Education and has become possible through modification of § 9 of the HRG, but the text of the Act itself does not mention accreditation. In this respect, it allows the Lander the freedom to maintain the current instruments in accordance with § 9 of the HRG, namely the agreement among state prime ministers for co-ordinating the administration of study and examinations. This procedure, which lays down minimum standards through the framework examination regulation, and which enables final examinations to be compared and students to be more mobile, has been called into question repeatedly by several Lander. I believe the reasons for this are sound and so I have no qualms in agreeing to the establishment of a rapid and competent working accreditation procedure. It remains important, however, that the minimum standards for course accessibility and the comparability of higher education final examinations is guaranteed, and that the high level of higher education training in the Federal Republic of Germany is not placed at risk. That does not mean supporting curricular uniformity. I am in favour of competition among departments also as far as the curriculum and final examinations is concerned. But it must still be possible to move from Mannheim to Greifswald without an unacceptable time delay, and the BWL economics course there must be the same as the BWL here and must carry the seal of quality professional qualification.

Two further aspects seem important to me for an accreditation procedure.

1. Who will carry out accreditation? Initially I think it should be the same office which is responsible for evaluation. I could well imagine a cross regional evaluation and accreditation agency. It would no doubt soon exercise strong influence on the higher education landscape in the Federal Republic and increase the quality and competitive pressure considerably. But where should this evaluation and accreditation agency be based? It is in the HRK's favour that evaluation is, in the first instance, part of the obligation of the higher education institutions themselves. By making evaluation their own within the context of the scientific methodology of constant critical self-control, they deserve an increase in autonomy. On the other hand, we might say, there is no point in asking turkeys whether they like Christmas. The Science Council would be free of any suspicion of bias. It also includes the component of the state as a whole and is experienced in matters of evaluation, not only in matters of course design but also in terms of research performance. That whole field still lies ahead of us in the higher education institutions. But I would not presume to give one or the other

institution precedence in matters of evaluation. Perhaps an accreditation body supported with great responsibility would be correct solution.

2. Accreditation can only gain significance and achieve recognition as a quality mark over and above the Lander if it is incorruptible, sharp, strict and sets high performance requirements, as well as minimum standards. Connected with this is the demand that each location and each course should be evaluated and reported upon in concrete terms. Such a report will not be restricted to the design of the examination and study regulations alone, but must also include the number of posts and the existence of resources.

Accreditation goes further down the road than the present procedure in accordance with § 9 of the HRG. In return, there is the attraction of a reduction in the density of regulations in the framework examination regulations, as well as the freedom to promote oneself and go an independent path as a higher education institution. With the growth in the scope of examinations we should not believe that, in the course of accreditation, we would become faster or would have to make less effort. The specialist competencies and consensus on minimum standards must, in any event, be drawn up by specialists, that is specialist commissions, and the factors which need to be measured are increasing. But that is the price you have to pay if you want to swat three flies in one go: freedom, quality assurance and curricular minimum standards.

Conditions for successful quality assurance in study and teaching

Professor Dr. Klaus Landfried

Imagine for a moment that you had a restaurant in Rostock. You are in competition: how can you raise your profile? With one chefs hat or two chefs hats in the Varta Guide, in the Gault Millau or with the stars in the Michelin Guide? And how are these awards made? The inspectors go and eat a test meal.

Higher education institutions in Germany are also increasingly subject to national and international competition. They are competing for new blood, academics, in other words for reputation, for research resources from third parties and here and there, particularly in engineering, for students – and not just for any old students, but for the best. The selection of students is currently somewhat difficult since we have to take everyone.

In research funded by third parties – e.g. in setting up research groups at the German Research Council (DFG), special research areas and graduate teams – competition through external assessment by project founders, and assessment of results by publication contributes to quality assurance and transparency. Performance strengths and weaknesses of departments and institutions become visible and known.

In recent years, procedures for the internal allocation of research resources in higher education institutions, and for performance and load-oriented distribution of basic resources for research and teaching from basic funding, guided by quantitative indicators, have increasingly spread. And it requires very few criteria – in contrast to what some people think – because the values which have been found correlate to a very high degree.

In teaching, the development of performance evaluation is still lagging somewhat behind. This general finding is not altered by the fact that the model Association of North German Universities and the Central Evaluation Agency in Lower Saxony already possess practical experience. But these are – for all the importance which accrues to these outstanding bodies – regionally limited. In North-Rhine/Westphalia the universities and colleges are just beginning to establish their own evaluation agencies.

Let me say quite openly that this regionalisation, indeed subregionalisation, of quality assurance causes me some concern in a Europe that is harmonising and in which the initiatives of the Science Ministers of a number of countries are leading to the creation of a European “currency system” of recognition of the equal value of study and examination performance. If this development continued, we would surpass the splintering of the Lander in this area. That can easily turn into provincialism and sub-provincialism – but need not if it is co-ordinated. We therefore need a joint umbrella, now more than ever, so that quality assurance in the higher education institutions takes place under comparable rules. The *Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung* (Centre for the Development of Higher Education Institutions) in Gütersloh and the *Stiftung Warentest* (Product Testing Foundation) presented this year an original and meaningful overview for chemistry and economics which left the borders of the German federal states out of account.

As far as the link between accreditation and evaluation is concerned, both must be kept strictly separate. We must evaluate so that we can learn to be better. And accreditation is the MOT for a set period for a programme and for people so that they keep minimum standards. That is something different and should not necessarily be part of one and the same thing, since otherwise the procedures do really begin to take a little too long. If you tested the performance of each vehicle in the MOT as fundamentally as is required by a so-called type verification and test, the vehicle would indeed be sitting in the queue for too long. We imagine it to be a little simpler.

Looking abroad can be instructive in evaluation matters. In many states, quality assurance in the higher education area has been taking place at national level for a long time. I quote Holland as an example from which the Germans have learnt a lot and whose representatives we have also invited to this conference; Denmark, France, the United Kingdom and Hungary are other examples. Here, evaluation has, for many years, been a proven instrument for rendering account and for self-management of higher education institutions. To date, Germany has regulated this by guidelines for, and approval of, examination regulations (*Prüfungsordnungen*) by the state, i.e. through *ex ante* management.

One or another Ministry official investigates the examination regulation while keeping a close eye of congruity. A full administrative check is made to ascertain whether certain paragraphs of the framework regulation have

been adhered to or not, or whether there is something completely new which is not part of the framework regulation at all. Often it can take months or even years, as some higher education institutions have told me, before accreditation is granted. A great deal of specialist knowledge exists in these Ministries, but not as far as the content of teaching is concerned.

International developments show that quality assurance is increasingly guided by results and must thus be subject to *ex post* control from a quantitative and qualitative perspective. It is only promising – this is also shown by international experience – if it is carried out under one’s own responsibility and independently, i.e. in the area of autonomy of the higher education institutions and with the unmistakable participation of students.

Evaluation of teaching should guide higher education institutions and departments in the direction of critical self-examination, document performance and load in research, teaching and services and help to highlight and remove problems. Existing development potential can only be used successfully if the strengths and weaknesses are truly recognised. Evaluations are not criminal proceedings and therefore do not require hanging judges, but offer advice and help in exploiting potentials to the full. Evaluation is an instrument of diagnosis and therapy. The quality assessment of a department can – apart from adherence to minimum standards – only take place with reference to self-set targets. It is therefore very important that serious dialogue takes place in the department in which the key objectives and the mission is laid down. In some departments, this could not even be reconciled with the departmental culture.

According to international experience, which also flowed into recommendations of the HRK and the Science Council (*Wissenschaftsrat*), evaluation, in the first instance, means self-assessment by an internal group of advisors and subsequently external evaluation by a group of subject experts, the peers, so that no “closed shop” can arise in which collective self-pity or self-praise are cultivated. What is important is that performance and load on departments are continually raised and regularly documented in line with quantitative indicators. In assessing the commitment of the teaching staff – keyword Tues-Wed-Thurs – and the didactic quality of the teaching, student representatives must, as I said, be unmistakably heard. When we talk of evaluation, it always refers to this interaction of internal and external test mechanisms. Without quality, there cannot be any long-term assurance.

Evaluation of teaching is essential to establish transparency in studies, teaching and examination. Teaching staff must test from time to time whether their current teaching still synchronises with the objectives of a given course and whether, through external commissions or other things, they might have been tempted to use five-year-old textbooks. As we know, it is not a rare occurrence that the study and examination regulations on paper do not always coincide with what is really happening. In the interests of planning their studies, students have a right to a remedy in such cases.

Evaluation is, of course, a means of public accountability, as the English say. Taxpayers' money is being used here, and taxpayers have a right to know that their money is being well spent.

Of course, considerable differences in acceptance are evident between individual higher education institutions and departments in the practical implementation of evaluation procedures. Often there are reservations here or there – not in Rostock of course – and partly also fear and misinformation about the objectives and procedural questions. Sometimes fears are expressed that transparency in performance could serve, above all, to legitimise a reduction in resources at short notice. I do not think that the Ministries would really consider this. That would indeed discredit evaluation. In this respect, it is important that there is a consensus that initial evaluation results should not be made the basis of budgetary decisions. It should also be clear, however, that after a “probation period”, weaknesses which have not been resolved have financial consequences up to and including closure. It is not for nothing that people have talked about the completely underdeveloped culture of closure in Germany. Evaluation can and should provide a rational basis of decision making and development planning at departmental level and the level of the higher education institution. The rules must be based on a broad consensus. But here, too, it applies that the higher education institutions themselves provide their rules for the performance and load-oriented distribution of resources within themselves and act accordingly.

In view of the continuing lack of clarity surrounding the objectives, purpose and procedures of evaluation, I welcome it most warmly that this joint event by the Association of North German Universities and Rostock University was made possible. My gratitude is due, in particular, to our partners of the host university who have organised this conference so well. I also thank the Federal Government and the Lander most sincerely who

provided special resources from HSP III to make the quality assurance project possible at HRK and thus responded to a proposal by the HRK. The HRK canvassed for a cross-regional agency to be set up which could take on co-ordinating tasks and work towards ensuring common standards of evaluation. The Joint Commission of the Federation and the Lander for Educational Planning and Research Promotion (BLK) commissioned the HRK in late 1997 with a project on “cross-regional exchange of experiences on measures to improve the quality of teaching”. To this end, the HRK secretariat has set up an own project management team in addition to our organisation – called Project Q. Organisational and financial resources from this project were used for this conference.

Quality assurance can only be successful in the long-term and bear fruit if it is based on a common conviction among all those involved. It is therefore necessary to reach a consensus as to what “quality of teaching” is, how it should be assessed, and what can be done to improve it. This is achieved through just such processes and not by decree from above. If we discuss that, and if we continue along this path after this conference – not only in the Association of North German Universities, but elsewhere in Germany too – so that this question of the regular assessment of our performance becomes something self-evident, as in other sectors and professional groupings; and if we manage to create a cross-regional agency for the accreditation of Bachelor’s and Master’s courses – if all of that succeeds, then students, too, will not see it as: “Much Ado about Nothing” or even “Love’s Labour’s Lost”.

The significance of quality assurance in higher education policy

Dr. Fritz Schaumann

In mid-August I read the review of a publication – “Professoren und Universitäten im 19. Jahrhundert – Zur Sozialgeschichte deutscher Geistes- und Naturwissenschaften” by Marita Baumgarten¹ – according to which the work is, at least historically, clearly beneficial for our topic.

The reviewer noted that the issue of the status of a university was nothing new unlike the relevant procedures for building up such a status, however uncertain to foolish they often were. In earlier centuries people knew “how to give a well-informed answer to this issue. The easily comprehensible university system made this easy. Even today it is not impossible to do so.”

The review also refers to the faculty colleagues who had their clear views about the disciplines and the representatives of the latter if asked discreetly. It would appear that it was difficult to give an assessment only when it had to be communicated publicly.

Marita Baumgarten distinguishes between starter, advancement and final-stage universities. The higher education institutions had varying opportunities for appointment and not every first or starter university acted as a supplier for all the others. There were fairly clear dependencies or procedures. For instance, it was not difficult to move from Kiel’s starter university to an advancement university but it was rarely possible to get to a final-stage university, especially if the student concerned was not a Protestant. Marita Baumgarten comes to the conclusion that in terms of prestige at that time – in both Prussia and the German Empire – Berlin was the leading university ahead of Munich and Leipzig; followed by Bonn, Heidelberg, Göttingen and Strasbourg, whereas Greifswald and Rostock – please forgive me for saying this here – were at the bottom of the table throughout that period.

¹ Marita Baumgarten, Professoren und Universitäten im 19. Jahrhundert. Zur Sozialgeschichte deutscher Geistes- und Naturwissenschaften, (Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft), Göttingen 1997.

This ranking dating back to the last century shows that discussions about the merits and demerits of subjects and institutions enjoy a long tradition and that there were attempts in earlier times to develop categorisation criteria.

In addition, we are in a way marking a tenth anniversary today. In July 1988, the then West German Conference of Rectors and Presidents of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions (WRK) held a very wide-ranging symposium entitled “Performance Assessment and Performance Comparison in Higher Education”, the foundations of which continue to apply to this day virtually unchanged. We can make use of the abundant material contained in the volume drawn up in conjunction with this symposium and find ourselves in the midst of the topical debate again. Be it the remit of the Vice Chancellors and Principals of British Universities as set out in the appendix: They assume that they should elaborate a number of performance ratios that cover inputs and outputs and are suitable for both use within individual universities and comparisons between higher education institutions. Be it the performance ratios themselves, which are defined very strikingly in qualitative terms and may even be useful in the years to come. Or be it the WRK’s decision of 1986 and the proposal for a system of reporting in higher education institutions, which Karl Alewell develops in the same volume as the conclusion to the conference.

These precursory activities show that we in Germany were quick to start this debate but unlike other countries slow to put into practice what was recognised as the right solution. Therefore, it will be important to speed up the pace somewhat in future and not to impede progress by constantly increasing the complexity of the whole issue.

The problem discussed at this and other conferences is comparatively easy. It is certainly comparable with quality-oriented categorisations in other fields of our lives such as the quality management system and its standardisations under ISO 9000 et seq., some of which have been applied, with modifications, to the issues of the higher education sector.

The new Framework Act for Higher Education was adopted amid some controversy by the German Bundestag in the middle of this year. Federal President Roman Herzog signed the Act; it was published in the Official Federal Gazette on 24 August and came into force on 25 August. After

years of very intense discussion, this creates the legal framework for the required structural changes to German higher education institutions. In my view, this should have put an end to the higher education debate about the basic principles of reform. With the amended Framework Act for Higher Education we have set out development paths for higher education institutions, which now have to be expanded as intensively and quickly as possible by everyone concerned through joint efforts.

I believe we have now reached the stage of implementing and putting into concrete terms the reforms adopted and are not engaging in a reform debate about reform. In this respect, the title of the conference, whoever is responsible for choosing it, is not binding on me. The question “Much ado about nothing?” is not an issue for me. Rather, we have to examine the following: Where do we stand? What are we to do, how are we to do it, using what means and over what period? How much will it actually cost to implement the desired reforms?

The new Framework Act for Higher Education is a compromise, which was the subject of protracted negotiations between the various interested parties. I would have been only too willing to go into the freedom granted to higher education institutions up to and including employer status, although this was not possible unfortunately through compromise. For me this remains the objective nevertheless, because the desired degree of self-management is inconceivable without the employer status of higher education institutions.

The main goal of the reformed Framework Act for Higher Education is to strengthen the efficiency of higher education institutions – but focusing on not just teaching but also the quality of research. It is also about assuring and enhancing the quality of services and administrative activities, which must be added to the main functions of teaching and research. After many vain attempts to achieve an improvement in the quality of university studies and teaching through regulatory university reform-oriented measures at federal level, we now believe, in agreement with virtually all those affected and in keeping with international trends, that a strengthening of self-responsibility and autonomy of institutions, on the one hand, and an intensification of competition among institutions of higher education, on the other, should be promoted.

In this context, the intensification of competition between university lecturers has not yet featured on the agenda in discussions on performance-

related regulations governing employment and remuneration. In the next four years we are bound to engage in a spirited debate on this issue. The initial stages, however, have already been elaborated but they have not yet been communicated in a way that offers a satisfactory basis for talks. We do not wish to discuss these problems at odds with the university lecturers; rather, we would like to hold the discussion with them – as far as possible based on comparable objectives.

The higher education institutions receive through the Framework Act for Higher Education greater freedom in organising their courses of study and examination regulations as well as with their internal management, especially on budgetary issues.

The Framework Act for Higher Education leaves it to the federal states to organise these freedoms. Unfortunately, with framework legislation we cannot prevent federal states from over regulating these freedoms again. We have therefore linked to the amended framework act the plea that the federal states and federal state parliaments should pass on this freedom of action by withdrawing input and process control in favour of output control.

The dismantling of performance-inhibiting regulations should lead to a veritable performance explosion among institutions which are essentially committed to science and thus implicitly to ethics, without any additional incentives being required. I acknowledge that this may sound somewhat ironic and cynical. However, this is much more than the passive removal of obstacles. Rather, it opens up scope for actively raising the profile of higher education institutions in competition with each other and in measuring their comparative strengths.

Of course, this degree of self-responsibility encompasses a new relationship between the state and higher education institutions. This relationship must no longer be marked by the process-controlling activities of ministerial bureaucracy; rather, it should be shaped by agreements, albeit quantified agreement. It will be necessary to implement a performance-related financing system, which offers rewards rather than penalties in the form of higher subsidies for good performance. This process also involves increasing the transparency of performance and the product of performance.

Despite all the public disputes at the end of the legislative procedure, there is largely a consensus over the key points of the reform not only between the Federal Government and federal states but also within higher education circles. The Conference of Rectors and Presidents of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions (HRK) and the Science Council have made this clear in various ways. The proposed reform was also long overdue. I hope that despite all the changes this reform will clearly mark the framework against whose background a German higher education institution's essential elements will be recognisable.

There is no disagreement about the need to assess performance. Occasionally I hear views to the contrary from the German Association of Higher Education Institutions, yet on the whole there is now little controversy – even internationally – about the need to assess how higher education institutions perform their varying functions.

Assessment serves two main functions: firstly, control and, secondly, legitimisation. Both functions belong together, although in my view the control function is much more important and indeed crucial. At the same time, it is obvious that performance without confirmation can lead to difficulties in the long run. In this respect, making sure about one's own position and about the conditions under which something is produced should certainly not be neglected.

A lot of things – almost too many – are subject to evaluation in every possible field in Germany today. Nevertheless, higher education is still a sector in which we must continue to make an effort to reach comparable and transparent results. Here I see a connection with measures already in progress such as the drafting of performance-related criteria for major research institutions, the assessment of the Blue List institutions by the Science Council and the systems evaluation of Max Planck institutes and the German Research Society. In this ongoing process we are also discussing activities relating to the assessment of higher education institutions, which happily have increased – not only in the Association of North German Universities.

These examples do not include state administration, although we shall of course conduct a debate in the next few years on the benefits of state bureaucracy in terms of the costs and the objectives set. In one way or another the relevant debate with the parliaments has already begun.

Administration of the scientific community has been comparatively unaffected to date, but no great powers of imagination are required to realise that this area too will become the focus of attention. This is also how I understand the new partnership. Perhaps we can then learn from the higher education institutions if we tackle the processes of self-assessment and self-monitoring more intensively.

Since 1991 we have wholly or partially funded a whole host of projects and conferences with a wide variety of institutions and achieved a great many results from these projects and conferences. The pilot project launched in the early 1990s and entitled “Improving the quality of teaching”, which comprised a survey of students, is worthy of mention in this regard, as are the “Profile-raising” project run by the Conference of Rectors and Presidents of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions (HRK) and the “Quality assessment in the higher education sector” project. A paper dating back to the early 1990s which is important in terms of its appraisal of the prospects for higher education’s development and the breadth of its approach was the policy document adopted in 1993.

For years the debate has centred on the issue of what form quality assurance methods in teaching should take. Whether, for instance, the assessments should be carried out by the addressees, meaning the students, or the future employers, as has been practised very successfully in some countries, or whether the methods should essentially constitute self-reporting by the higher education institutions or a mixture of self-diagnosis with external judgements and the resulting conclusions. It seems to me that this issue has now been decided in favour of the latter option. Obviously there is also agreement that the evaluation results should be made public, be comparable across higher education institutions and have direct financial implications – either negative or positive.

The debate on general principles was from our point of view already concluded by the recommendations of the Science Council and the HRK. The fact that the opinion is held in many quarters that the debate on general principles has yet to come reflects the variegation and diversity of the German higher education sector.

In my view, it is agreed that evaluation is the prerequisite for quality competition and should occur as a combination of self-reporting and peer review, In the Association of North German Universities this method leads,

according to the impression I have gained from the relevant publications and private conversations, not to direct, serious processes of change but to favourable success in terms of the experience gained.

Many details regarding the method are still open-ended in the general debate and have to undergo trials. These trials are not a matter for the state, which would, for instance, set higher education institutions criteria, the suitability of which would then have to be examined by the latter. Rather, it is the task – already tackled in some cases – of higher education institutions themselves to develop criteria and then to test their appropriateness.

Nevertheless, it was right under the Higher Education Special Programme III to make available substantial funding to the tune of DM 120 million, to support various assessment initiatives, evaluate experience systematically and arrive at a system aimed at comparability and as nationwide as possible.

One problem, which in my view is also being discussed internationally in these terms, is the danger that if highly complex evaluation criteria are developed this will lead to the unintentional homogenisation of performance. The combination of self-reporting and peer review for the assessed higher education institutions and subjects can create pressure for uniformity, which may not be intended whatsoever, if the emphasis is to be on diversity and increased competition and competitiveness. Therefore, in the elaboration of such criteria it is necessary to devote oneself to the crucial problem of comparability of the dissimilar. From this perspective of comparability of the dissimilar, structural diagnosis and structural development have to coincide.

It is important for me to stress that there should no longer be a debate about whether evaluation processes should be allowed. I consider such discussions to be outdated and no longer legitimate, even if the lecturers' lobby sees this differently in public. For me it is much more important to establish who will carry out what assessments under -what criteria, at what cost and over what period. I regard this as the long-term challenge facing higher education institutions themselves –supplemented by external assessments.

Of course, I agree that a quantitatively oriented set of data alone will not be sufficient for these evaluation procedures. The interpretation and collection

of qualitative data is a necessary further means of assessment, for which the widest possible range of proposals already exists. I am only too aware that it is still difficult to compare data from different higher education institutions, not to mention doing so from federal state to federal state. The fact that this is nonetheless possible is proved by various creditable attempts including the recent guide to university studies compiled by Stiftung Warentest and the Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung for individual subjects.

The conclusion is also that evaluation must take place at subject level. However, it is difficult to switch from this level to an assessment of the whole higher education institution because the performance of a higher education institution is not equivalent to the summation of individual subject evaluations. Even if limited use is made of such aggregative data, no great expectations should be attached to their findings.

Such assessments are, in my opinion, of internal benefit to the subject first of all. I agree with the approach of the Association of North German Universities, which firstly insists on the voluntary nature of the procedure and secondly hands over the evaluation results to the assessed parties for them to act upon. On the other hand, things cannot be left there. The performance of higher education institutions must be assessed across federal state boundaries and correspondingly be based on data whose comparability can be legitimised both theoretically and practically. I am against giving up the requirement for comparability and assessment across federal states.

One important aspect of quality assurance is communicating the assessment procedure and its results confidently and actively to the state, which is providing the necessary funding, the students and the users. It is better to demonstrate in public active efforts to tackle shortcomings than to conceal disagreeable results. A good lesson can be learned from the way in which a major German company handled one of its products which failed the “elk test”. Publicity about deficiencies can teach us how to stylise efforts to tackle shortcomings into positive conduct.

An external element of debate and supervision is also indispensable to the self-controlling function of evaluation. Without doubt this means high expenditure for higher education institutions and for the whole academic system. However, the quality assurance function for optimising individual

components and the entire system justifies this –albeit only with an honest and self-critical assessment process and all the more so if the degree of honesty and self-criticism increases.

Another important aspect in quality assurance is Section 6 of the new Framework Act for Higher Education, which stipulates that students must be involved in assessing the quality of teaching. This applies, in my view, to internal and external assessment as well as putting the results into everyday practice at higher education institutions.

The fact that internal assessment has subtly differentiated consequences in terms of performance and level of performance can be seen from several experiments conducted in the higher education sector. Worthy of mention in this regard is the assessment process carried out at Dortmund University, which –albeit within very strict limits –is geared to resource allocation.

In the context of the debate about assessment and performance-related funding, critics like to voice the suspicion that the Federal Government and federal states are interested not so much in directing resources to the areas where they can be used most effectively as in cutting services in the short term under the pretext of quality assurance.

At the Federal Ministry of Education and Research we have not linked an insistence on performance assessment and reflections on the consequences of performance to savings at higher education institutions. I am saying this not just with regard to 27 September but also because in the draft budgets for the next few years we are intending to use at least half of the increased funding achieved for expanding higher education institutions. Indeed, we are planning to spend the increased funding in a performance-oriented and competition-promoting manner on expanding multimedia, international courses of study, improved structures for business start-ups, up-to-date marketing of higher education institutions and transfer of university results.

We are not interested in conducting this debate from the point of view of forcing higher education institutions to make savings. Rather, we are seeking to ensure improved distribution of resources and more precise allocation of the available money. Therefore, we shall try in funding our promotion of research – in the current budget amounting to approx. DM 800 million – to arrive at more performance-oriented criteria, i.e. at least linking the allocation of resources to the supply of performance-oriented

reports by recipients. In this way we are seeking to arrive inductively at a set of data that will enable us with both the decisions of the German Research Society and the decisions on project promotion of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research to proceed in a more performance-oriented and targeted manner.

After all, evaluation is also related to accreditation. I hope in this regard, firstly, that the talks between the HRK and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Lander in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) on accreditation will be concluded as soon as possible. Secondly, I hope that the narrow-minded fears of some federal state governments that accreditation might mean a loss of influence can be allayed. I see a pressing European and international need for us to move in the direction of accreditation, which is conducted across federal states, close to higher education institutions and based on results.

I am confident that through these evaluation and accreditation activities we shall increase the mobility of researchers and students in Europe, enhance the competitiveness of our institutions and thus open up new vistas.

Evaluation, indicators and accreditation
Moving towards the self-justification society
Professor Dr. Michael Daxner

(for K.L. and S.T.)

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day,

Comparison

Thou art more lovely and more temperate,

Criteria

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of may,
and summer's lease hath all too short a date;

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, and often in his gold complexion
dimmed; and every fair from fair sometimes declines,

Theory, generalisation

by chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,

Agreement on objectives

nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st, nor shall death brag thou wander'st
in his shade, when in eternal lines to time thou grow'st;

Conditions governing objectives

So long as man can breathe, or eyes can see,

Vision and hypothesis

so long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

legitimisation

(Sonnet No. 18 by William Shakespeare)

An exemplary evaluation of the status of a loved person which is beyond
compare. I do not know whether there are less great poems which we may
misuse for our own purposes. The end justifies all possible tactics:
whatever is to be judged not in moral terms but in empirical terms should at
last be taken into account:

1. Not whether but how evaluation is carried out and whether we know the purposes of this undertaking is the order of the day.

In Japan 83 percent of higher education institutions engage in evaluation, with questionable benefits. There is clearly little change at the heart of the structures as against pronounced polarisation on the fringes (Arimoto 1998, CHER). Participation in the evaluation business is becoming one of the constitutive elements of higher education institutions and is taken increasingly for granted the more forcefully they have to legitimise their position as the central institution in society. Evaluation is a highly delicate way of combating the process of filleting into a wide variety of productive individual activities, each boasting higher efficiency than the higher education institution as a whole. This process is delicate because it has to submit to the same need for justification that it is not allowed to apply to make meaningful statements about quality and the potential for reform.

The practical use of evaluation lies in the fact that it does not operate through comparisons; rather, it opens up the existing structures “hermeneutically” in order to make them accessible to changes in the direction of the objectives set. This does not mean that there are no objective or roughly objectifiable standards, as the persistent opponents of evaluation claim. On the contrary, the quality standards for science and study are largely comprehensible and apart from quantitative variables are of course governed by strong rules through convention (e.g. the recognition factors within a discipline). This means, unlike with indicator-controlled financing, that it is not the neighbouring discipline, the closest comparable course etc, which supplies the criteria for evaluation; rather, these criteria are obtained from the reflection of a meta-level, which is constantly seeking the best “form” for an existing course of study –including social expectations, external and internal pressure as well as a realistic assessment of the existing potential. A good evaluation also involves stating clearly what cannot be taken as the criteria of the investigation.

2. Some countries (France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Australia, etc.) have already entered a second phase (Neave 1998, 261). It is important for Germany to define this stage more precisely even though we are still only in the first phase.

What is awaiting us? The problem of meta-evaluation is that it is very difficult to convey as long as the first phase has not been internalised. The

“feel” for quality that is required for this internalisation seems to me to be one of the central yet one of the most incomprehensible problems of our higher education policy. Why do our students oppose “excellence” and “elitism” if they are studying for free anyway? Why are the majority of somewhat old-fashioned lecturers not prepared to subject their quality standards – and these surely exist – to external examination and put them to the test within the public debate on performance?

There are sociologically and psychologically tenable answers but they seem to have little impact on the political process. For instance, the rhetorical resistance to any form of exercised “accountability” is reduced to the justified rejection of any economisation of science (the university as a business rather than an enterprise) or resistance to expenditure which seems to be totally disproportionate to the result achieved.

However, the need for quality seems to me to be an effective lever in implementing more reforms, for how are we to justify the constantly rising costs of our teaching, study, research and services activities if we do not make the quality criteria available for public scrutiny, which means mediating even at this level between experts and laymen? This would be the level of effectiveness to be achieved through evaluation.

The operative level of efficiency, meaning the transparent indicator-controlled justification of the means used, can also be based on evaluation results, albeit neither directly nor clearly. State inspectors have yet to learn that they must not use and abuse evaluation for these financing models if they are not to bring the whole business into disrepute.

3. The Evaluative State: Vision, nightmare, annoying side effect (Neave 1998, Bleiklie 1998). It has no longer been possible to avoid this question since under the guise of “accountability” the dominance of criticism of the product and that of control over the controlled have pursued their own ideological ends.

- a) The state is continuing to perform its supervisory role in a more experienced manner and with greater participation by the institution concerned;
- b) Evaluation is the price that the higher education institutions have to pay for the entrepreneurial autonomy that has grown with market liberalisation;
- c) For about twenty years evaluation has been serving a number of purposes, which are only loosely connected:

- Legitimation of existing policy (verification);
- The crises anticipated from reforms introduced or from defence mechanisms (“orthodox interpretation”, [Neave 1998, 268] in response to quality deficiencies, overcrowding, market liberalisation etc.);
- Regulation, in so far as the legitimisation of higher education institutions in relation to taxpayers, hierarchies among government departments etc. should be made transparent – an indirect way of restrengthening state control (including private institutions, which also receive state grants according to a quality and indicator model, e.g. CUNY [Wasser 1998, CHER]);
- always with consequences for democracy within universities, intervention from outside, basic political motives in Europe, justifying the system or basic economic parameters in the USA.

An explicit and comprehensible higher education policy is required to order, grade or rule out such purposes. This sounds trivial but it is not, because the cited purposes can be at best elements in such a policy but not form its core. One of the main features of higher education policy is that it can make its quality criteria – not its financial framework – the subject of legitimisation – something which has been forgotten in Germany for many years.

4. When self-management, autonomy and accountability become the symbolic and pragmatic tool for higher education institutions’ legitimisation and operations, the state must wonder whether its legislation and administration (still) really have the authority to act as the owners of higher education institutions.

No state is so altruistic as to deprive itself of its power for the purpose of better and cheaper higher education institutions. Conversely, we are asking industry whether it can really tell from the results of evaluation the extent to which its demands are being met: the lists of corporate spokesmen are reduced to trivial indicators (duration of courses of study, output in the job application market, level of university qualifications) or else they actually return to content-based findings. Then there is, for example, no binding, standard-setting political language and no set of recognised criteria, in short: policy-based quality hermeneutics. The second phase of evaluation has to consider this while the first must prepare for it.

The state, industry and the higher education institutions should understand and tackle at least one issue in unison: academic freedom with all that this

entails in particular including some privileges is antagonistic towards autonomy. These two factors must not be played off or set against each other; rather, they must be used in such a way that they complement each other. If therefore higher education institutions try out evaluation, indicator control and accreditation all at the same time, this experiment will be successful only if one element does not eliminate the other. New forms of codetermination and participation must be called for so that the protagonists do not fall victim to autonomy from the outset and have lost their critical qualitative working basis before evaluation is even carried out.

5. Dilemmas which may be tolerable but we should simply not let stand:

a) Autonomy versus external requirements: Responsiveness as the medium for varying forms of response in the conflict between internal and external forces; as to be specifically demonstrated by the practical application of a course of study.

b) Academic freedom versus mission (Bleiklie 1998, 303f.). In this regard, Bernal can be cited: His static history of science had a strong impact in 1968 and interprets the objective of science as that of serving mankind and society. The differing priorities which come from the two poles can be applied to the dialectic of freedom and autonomy (cf. 4.).

c) Recently the construction of the stakeholders (Daxner 1998, CHER) has been dominant over the traditional representation of interest groups. It is necessary to determine not only the interests which are to a greater or lesser degree legitimate and defined of groups acting in concert but also their “deployment” in the game – why should I involve a particular group in the decision-making process for a higher education institution? (cf. the wide variety of concepts relating to university councils: Alliance 90/Greens in the Framework Bill for Higher Education, CHE 1998, John Davies (CRE] 1998, etc.)

6. What is evaluation, what are indicators and what does accreditation mean?

We are posing the question again, not just rhetorically. We have to find more answers and answers that complement one other and overlap even though we recognise at the same time that the process is already under way. First of all, it is a matter of rationalisation in the sense of the sensible, civil, democratic etc. shaping of the way in which science is organised and conveyed in a key institution within civil society, namely the university. No

definitions are called for here for concepts clearly understood. Rather, the interrelations of the whole system are the key.

A description of the interrelations is necessarily complex and never refers to general systems but always to the link between the latter and specific institutions (Daxner 1997).

Evaluation is the active internalised interpretation of recognised tasks or methods and techniques and how they are tackled. It always has at least three objectives:

- a) To understand and improve an existing structure;
 - b) To modify, expand and adapt to demand the purposes of this structure;
 - c) To organise the framework for social activity within the institution.
- (In this instance a “structure” can mean a course of study, a discipline, a project, etc.)

Objectives a) and b) are to be understood in the context of leadership and mediation with regard to external needs. This means that we ask who is responsible for the decisions in a university being taken or legitimised in a certain way in relation to the public. This can occur as the residue of autonomy within the “loosely coupled system” of the university (Weick 1976, in: Daxner 1998, CHER) and above all c) as the free creative and social association of researchers, teachers, students, etc. as the realisation, as it were, of the traditional key functions of higher education institutions.

The primary concern is taking reform, flexibility, self-criticism, and so on, in hand. Communication, internal democracy, etc. are being put to the test, so that the demands placed on oneself can be formulated which will then be the subject of negotiations with the organisations that sponsor higher education, the state, committees, and so on. Thus, the university becomes the protagonist and agency and no longer merely the agent of a policy defined by an outside institution.

In policy terms, we have to give the indicators a reliable framework in order to preserve the system and protect the institution against unpredictable setbacks and crises. Indicators are indicators are indicators...

All acrobatic attempts to give them more than an indicative nature are bound to lead to ideological ends. They are tools for setting standards of

comparison within homogeneous policy segments but only scarcely between heterogeneous policy segments. Therefore, only very global indicators are appropriate. If the differentiation is too great, individual fields of application are discharged from the system. Excessive hermeneutics makes application impossible. Therefore, we can have clarity but only limited applicability.

Accreditation is the socio-economic and political eye of a needle. Like evaluation it has always existed. Accreditation is the substantiated, revocable advance on trust (credit), based on comprehensible criteria, which society or the state give to institutions. If the stakeholders can have trust, they do not make any inappropriate or excessive demands on higher education institutions. President Landfried's comparison with the declaration of roadworthiness is highly plausible as the "early modern concept". The second phase of evaluation should however also introduce an "early warning system", an elaborated investment plan: what must happen to ensure that an accredited course of study is really good ... This offers all sorts of scope for justifying intervention. If something specific does not happen, the state, the university council, the university's governing body, the senate, and so on, can interfere in the foundations of the accredited entity.

7. A changed trend also means a changed theory!

Initially everything was "positivist" in the US connotation of "evaluation" and "hermeneutics", on the one hand, and "indicators" and "positivist", on the other.

This is not trivial. For this very reason, evaluation is not suited to direct implementation in financial or organisational control measures (cf. Henkel 1998, 285 et seq.). One basic problem especially in German politics is that the "state" and "society" are too close to one another and the state's control interest is too readily equated with the needs of society. In this respect, the American "positivism" dating back to the 1950s was a form of emancipation, which was reflected initially in the economics of education. As a result of the functionalist dominance of the Anglo-Saxon theory on higher education, it was only logical to give preference to empirical data as the basis for demonstrating the success owed by society. The qualitative change was inevitable as the needs of society persistently changed, for instance, with direct progress no longer tied to the mere quantitative expansion of the tertiary sector (from about 1970).

The surmounting of managerialism leads to two encouraging trends, in my view: firstly, reflection based on conservative values in the broadest sense – on the central role of the university and its many and varied provisions (Rothblatt; Trow 1993); secondly, working out the difference between indicators as a financing tool and evaluation as an instrument in reform (Daxner 1997). The difference itself is one of the political hermeneutics of quality and its sustained dynamics – a subject which is still so good cannot remain as it is.

8. Parties

More important is the question: who should evaluate? Henkel (1998, 287) refers to an early distinction (Rossi 1982): social scientists (evaluative research) or connoisseurs (evaluation) or “art criticism” (House 1980). Weber’s division into politics and science shows through here fully.

Problems with defining peers, validating results, defining artefacts –evaluation brings facts to light that can be used but do not “exist” – and obstacles and barriers (El-Khawas 1998). They give rise to a list of desiderata, which we must now both explore and use for the current very specific policies being pursued in higher education institutions. For instance, it is very important that students are involved with their peers as part of an equal process in the evaluation processes not only for democratic reasons. The student evaluators are both laypersons and experts, subjects and objects of the process. Their assessments and perceptions provide the initial link between the purpose of the venture and its form and content, which extend far into the social element of study and living at a higher education institution and into the social and cultural network.

9. Conclusion

The matter of concern is simple, because it is already materialising. It is also terribly difficult because it must carve out, between the Scylla of economisation and the Charybdis of the irresponsible granting of privileges, a path, which is costly in terms of higher education policy and has to prevail over much resistance, vested rights, prejudice and long-established habits. What counts is what results from quality, relevance and method. What is important must be performed well and include those who are affected or will be affected.

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Summary of following discussion

Tanja Jeschke M.A.

At the start of the discussion, reference was made to the need to conduct evaluation in an integrated manner. It was noticeable how much time was spent in making reform proposals compatible with the regulations of superior state authorities. As long as there was still such a great discrepancy between word and deed as far as deregulation was concerned, the restrictions on the ability of departments to be creative had to be included in the evaluation. Instead of concentrating solely on the department in an evaluation, superior institutions also had to be included.

Prof. Spinner introduced the concept of non-performance. Evaluation should be linked to performance, i.e. it should evaluate good performance positively and bad performance negatively. As a consequence, the key concept was not that of performance, but that of non-performance. The evaluation catalogue was likely to confront the evaluators with a wealth of non-performance such as inertia or a reputation based on yesterday's achievements, which was not, of course, connected with present or future performance. The evaluation assessment thus had to include non-performance and non-performers. He also referred to the opposing positions in respect of the possible linking of evaluation and accreditation, which had, for example, been welcomed by Minister Marquardt, but rejected by President Landfried. There was a danger here – this also touched on non-performance – that evaluation did not lead to an improvement in quality but served to strengthen the administration.

Prof. Daxner spoke against academic freedom being expressed in the premature gratitude of the homeland on an individual basis in the form of a lifetime position. On the contrary, permanent posts had to be permanently earned or they would become unattractive. People should not be threatened with dismissal, but it should be made unattractive to remain in a permanent post without a regular rise in performance.

Dr. Lüthje stressed that within an evaluative framework, in particular, a very precise distinction had to be made between the attempt to measure performance and the attempt to develop quality. He emphasised Prof. Daxner's formulation that the strategy of evaluation had changed from a positivistic to a hermeneutic one. In this respect, one had to decide in any evaluation whether output was to be measured positivistically or

quantitatively. This was a procedure which had to happen externally and which could also result in political consequences. Such a system for measuring performance was quite distinct from an evaluation system directed at the quality of the performance process and at the quality of the result. This process focussed, in the first instance, on agreement on targets and quality characteristics and thus on something quite different from quantitative output: an output could be both acceptable in quantitative terms yet poor in qualitative terms. If the state intended to measure output positivistically and quantitatively, it should develop procedures to do so. It was then the responsibility of the institutions to find an adequate reaction to that so that quality was not totally ignored. But if the procedure was designed to produce improvement and the development of quality, then only a strategy could be successful which proceeded hermeneutically and endeavoured to win the understanding of those who took an active part in the production of quality and in whose hands alone the quality issue lay.

Prof. Callies responded that the aspects of quality and quantity could not be precisely separated. An institution set education targets which it wished to achieve. But if it did so in a quantitative resource situation which did not accord with that, then either the resources were inadequate or the targets had not been properly set. It would have to decide how to tackle that politically.

Mr Luther thought it important that the students should not be the ones to lose out, i.e. should not bear the consequences of bad teaching. He further criticised the fact that research evaluation had not been mentioned and warned higher education institutions against voluntarily relinquishing this aspect, since the unity of research and teaching had to be an important quality criterion. He emphasised that the Länder were responsible for higher education according to the Basic Law. The Federal Government clearly saw this in a different light, which could be seen in the rejection of a right of approval by the Länder of the Framework Act for Higher Education (HRG) or in the 200 million Mark programme planned without the Länder. The higher education institutions had to decide whether they preferred the Federal Government to the Länder as the more distant source of finance and partner.

Prof. Daxner responded to the remark by commenting that the debate should be widened from the universities to the colleges by referring to the much greater urgency of the problems at the universities. In view of the

dispute over competency between the Federal Government and the Länder, it should have been up to at least one of the five or six protesting Länder to mount a legal challenge to the, in their view, lack of consultation in the legislative process for the HRG in advance of the federal elections. In the present situation, it was rather irrelevant to the higher education institutions whether they received the necessary money via the HBFG and special programmes or via the Länder, as long as they received it at all in a transparent procedure. With the HBFG it was clear that the resources which are used for building conversion and equipment would have to be expressly tied to the evaluation result and no longer to indicators. Nevertheless, replacement investment was being utilised precisely in those areas where in quality terms one would have to say: “You have to change first before you can have credit again.” It was a necessary consequence of evaluation and of the fact that students should not lose out, that the social situation of students had to be a key parameter in the evaluation process.

Summary of reports from the working groups

Philipp Busch

Concentrating on various aspects, the working groups dealt with evaluation and the implementation of evaluation results. To this end, the speakers in the parallel sessions presented practice models – the Dutch higher education inspectorate (Working Group 2) and the reform process at the Hamburg School of Economics and Politics (Working Group 6); reflected on evaluation procedures – against the background of peer experience (Working Group 1) and in a comparison of rankings and evaluation (Working Group 4); and discussed procedural questions – contract management (Working Group 3) and standards of evaluation (Working Group 5).

The results of the ensuing discussions were presented in the Plenary Meeting by the moderators. Here, one central topic recurred in constantly new and different interpretations, namely that evaluation as an autonomous procedure undertaken by higher education institutions also had, of necessity, to lead to internal action by such institutions. The variations on the theme referred, above all, to existing or still to be found ways of ensuring sustained and improved quality assurance following a comprehensive evaluation of courses and teaching.

Experiences in departmental evaluation

Under the core question “How can departments approach the results of evaluation?”, Professor Dr. Kieser began by illustrating his experiences of evaluation (see his contribution in this volume). Professor Dr. Callies chaired the discussion and summarised it for the Plenary Meeting.

A key question raised by participants had referred to the function of evaluation, Professor Dr. Callies said. It was still not clear whether the purpose of evaluation was to test higher education institutions and departments or to accompany them in an advisory capacity; from the institutions’ point of view, a process of evaluation designed as an accompanying advisory process took preference. But this process had to lead to action within higher education institutions. At issue was the form which such action should take, who should implement it and in which way. It was conceivable that the management of a higher education institution could use the evaluation and its results as an instrument of control by

means of the internal allocation of resources. On a departmental level, work should be undertaken leading to the use of the evaluation to initiate action to resolve existing and identified problems. In order to enable decisive reforms to take place and improve the situation regarding courses and teaching, the higher education institutions required freedom without state influence. In such a position of autonomy, the higher education institutions and departments could develop their own measure of quality and work to implement it.

The inclusion of framework conditions for the basic course and teaching conditions and the classification of the quality .i.e. the academic abilities _of students were specified as two of the principles to be considered in evaluation procedures. External evaluation via peer review could be understood as a joint learning process by peers and students in a department, which should, as far as possible, lead to an improvement in the quality of courses and teaching.

One serious procedural issue was considered to be the problem that the motivation of a department to institute change could disappear after the conclusion of the internal and external evaluation if the results were not taken up quickly enough by the management of the higher education institution and made to bear fruit through a binding follow up.

Evaluation control by the Dutch higher education inspectorate

Professor Dr. Haensel reported from the working group which dealt with the Dutch method, presented by Ko Scheele, of accompanying and controlling evaluation procedures (see the contribution by Scheele in this volume)

In Holland – the “mother of evaluation in Europe” – evaluation, accompanied by financial and organisational autonomy of higher education institutions, was a state instrument of control, as Professor Dr. Haensel emphasised. The procedures in Holland and in the example of the Association of North German Universities corresponded in internal and external evaluation and in subsequent agreements on targets, but there were some differences in follow up.

Thus, in Holland the publication of the report on the results of the evaluation helped students to decide where they wanted to study and - as a

consequence of this “steering” of student numbers – also influenced the financial provision of a higher education institution. As far as evaluation in Germany was concerned, thought should be given to allowing such evaluation reports, which were hitherto published only internally in the higher education institutions or in the department, to be more widely publicised.

Furthermore, the results were used more intensively as instruments of control in Holland. The evaluation results in the higher education institutions of the Association of North German Universities only had an indirect and minor effect on the internal distribution of resources if, as a result of an evaluation, a department had resources cut or increased and this affected other departments due to a budgetary “zero sum game”. In Holland, on the other hand, the Education Ministry could decide on conditions for individual departments on the basis of evaluation reports, as far as including their closure. In this respect, however, Holland need not necessarily serve as a model for German higher education institutions.

Contract management and target agreements

Under the keyword “contract management”, the working group moderated by Klaus Neuvians took as its subject the link between evaluation and self-management of higher education institutions. Professor Dr. Daxner – who due to the illness of Professor Dr. Timm stepped in at the last minute to replace him – initiated a discussion focussing on the instrument of target agreements. Since a detailed report is given elsewhere, (see the contribution by Neuvians in this volume), only a brief outline of the key results will be presented.

There was consensus in the discussion that target agreements should be considered an appropriate management tool for higher education institutions. It is based not on conditions imposed “from above”, but on objectives supported and accepted by all. Implementation of a target agreement should be flanked, as a management measure, by reporting and controlling mechanisms which were capable of providing information on the achievement of the target. By this means, target agreements became a module in a complex management circle which was completed by instruments for the formula-based allocation of resources and by evaluation as a process of quality assurance.

Evaluation and ranking

On the basis of the report by Dr. Hornbostel (see the contribution in this volume), the working group tackled the common elements of and differences between evaluation and ranking. Dr. Schreier presented the results of the discussion in the Plenary Meeting.

He emphasised the publicity value of ranking, which was intended to provide information in the press about the performance of higher education institutions and departments. Evaluation, in contrast, could serve for internal publicity purposes in higher education circles as a medium for reporting back and controlling courses and teaching.

Despite their different target groups, evaluation and ranking were based on the same principle, reflecting reality only in respect of certain issues and reducing inevitable complexity by the construction of models. Both evaluation and ranking represented constructs of reality. The important thing was to be aware of this and work in a methodically clear-cut and adequate manner.

The discussion had concentrated in particular on the relevance of comparative evaluation: to what extent was it relevant and possible within the framework of an evaluation explicitly to compare the performance of similar higher education institutions and departments without necessarily aiming for a ranking? Associated with this was the problem of whether or not the allocation of resources between and within higher education institutions should be linked and should be allowed to be linked to such comparisons.

Another type of comparative evaluation was related to the improvement in quality which could be ascertained in departmental courses and teaching between two evaluation procedures: what was the result achieved by the second evaluation of a department some time after the first one with identical instruments? To initiate desirable measures for the development of quality and exclude futile evaluation endeavours, some thought had to be given to incentives and sanctions for higher education institutions and departments

Standards of evaluation

Dr. Fischer-Bluhm – who, due to the illness of Professor Dr. Nieke, stepped in to replace him at short notice – initiated the discussion in this working group, working along the lines of meta-evaluation, and assumed the task of moderator and reporter (see the report by Dr. Fischer-Bluhm in this volume).

Interest focussed on the question of how standards for the evaluation of courses and teaching could be acquired and defined, Dr. Fischer-Bluhm reported. There had been agreement that such standards should not be normative in substance, but should be restricted to procedural questions. Adequate substantive standards as dynamic basis of individual evaluation procedures should be developed locally.

In view of the discussion on procedural standards, Project **Q** of the Conference of Rectors of Higher Education Institutions should take a coordinating role.

Evaluation and organisation development

Taking the example of the Hamburg School of Economics and Politics, Dr. Kunzel, Mrs Nickel and Professor Dr. Zechlin set out the opportunities for organisational development in higher education institutions (see their contribution in this volume). The debate, the results of which were reported by Professor Dr. Zechlin in the Plenary Meeting, referred above all to the necessary and lacking conditions for reform processes in higher education institutions.

One of the key conditions for initiating such processes entailed spanning the rigid structures of higher education institutions with their equally represented bodies without striking off academic self-management. The School of Economics and Politics had opted for project-like structures, the academic and administrative staff had been linked more closely according to thematic aspects and the profile enhancing areas had been directly allocated to the School management in the form of staff posts. A further important aspect was the implementation of team structures in the School's management.

An ongoing reform process had to be understood primarily as a communicative process into which public opinion within higher education

circles had to be integrated. Higher education institutions thus required additional qualifications in the field of organisational development up to and including conflict management. The relevant know-how could be found in the economics faculties, but this was used much too infrequently for the organisational development of own higher education institutions.

Comprehensive reform processes also entailed changing the basic framework. This applied, on the one hand, to service regulations as relevant to higher education institutions, which had to be made considerably more flexible. On the other hand, consideration ought to be given to the question of whether or not the position of students as consumers should be strengthened as a stimulus for reform – by the introduction of fees.

Short conclusion

Variations on a theme: as a process belonging to autonomous higher education institutions, evaluation should lead to internal action in such institutions; it should turn into a management instrument for and in the higher education institutions through the information it provided and through its follow up.

In the first instance – the discussion in the six working groups can be summarised in the following way – this requires the opportunity for and the readiness of all those involved to start a communicative process on the quality of courses and teaching and to continue it on a permanent basis. In order to ensure that this process does not deviate, the management of higher education institutions and departments must ensure, by means of binding and concrete agreements, that consequences are drawn from results and measures are taken.

The way in which evaluation, as a communications process and follow up, can be initiated and given permanent status remains controversial: does such a process continue running like a *perpetuum mobile* once it has been carefully started? Or does it require permanent enticements through incentives and threat of sanctions?

Every-day experience of evaluative processes and the specification to use evaluation as a management instrument, make the latter more likely: reform processes get underway in departments following an evaluation if they were already underway or if –negative and positive –financial incentives beckon...

Evaluation and accreditation

Objectives and consequences of linking evaluation and accreditation

Dr. Josef Lange

“No secret and not difficult . Evaluation of research, teaching and service in the USA” (Heading of an article by Daniel Fallon in “Forschung & Lehre” 8/98, p.403).

“On the right path - Evaluation of teaching and studies in electrical engineering . (Heading of an article by Peter Büchner in “Forschung & Lehre” 8/98, p.406).

“Evaluation is an opportunity for a higher education institution to go on the offensive, provided that it has not only the structural ability to take action but also the determination to do so.” (Hans Joachim Meyer, quoting: .Peter Büchner, loc. cit.)

“Evaluations especially peer evaluations, do not usually increase the transparency of the evaluated system for outsiders. Evaluations create the reality that they pretend to measure. Those being evaluated create a system that corresponds with the ideal of the designers of evaluation.” (Alfred Kieser: Das Idealbild der Evaluationskonstrukteure [The ideal of the evaluation designers], in: “Forschung & Lehre” 8/98, pp.⁴⁰⁸ .411, p. 411).

These quotes show that far from being “a lot of fuss about nothing” the conference is about procedures, which impact on higher education institutions in varying ways. Evaluation is a process which is intended to safeguard and enhance quality. This process appears costly in higher education institutions, yet in other sectors of society quality assurance is taken for granted. How else can confidence be built in complex systems? It also goes without saying that evaluation costs time and money.

If higher education institutions wish to see a positive change in the attitude of politicians and the public to higher education, they must find suitable ways and means to bring this about. They must avoid the insinuation or

reproach of “improper maintenance of standards” in the words of the Federal Constitutional Court as an argument put forward by ministries for cuts or as a charge regarding the use of resources for research rather than for training young people. In order to make a persuasive case in this respect, higher education institutions must define their role and demonstrate ways in which they can fulfil this role properly and in full awareness of their responsibilities.

The entire higher education system and individual higher education institutions are complex because they have to fulfil many tasks and face many and varied expectations and challenges.

As distinct from the idea of the university as the indivisibility of teaching and research in the community of teachers and students, the tasks facing higher education institutions at the end of the 20th century can be defined as follows:

- Research and development,
- Teaching and studies,
- Training a new generation of academics for all sectors of society,
- Academic continuing education and
- Services.

Higher education institutions perform these tasks within a higher education system established, supported, funded and indeed regulated by the state. However, the state is prevented by the German constitution, the Basic Law, (Section 5, Subsection 3) and also not in a position to lay down how higher education institutions perform their tasks and discharge their responsibilities.

So as to fulfil their tasks, higher education institutions need autonomy and responsibility for their own affairs. In return for this autonomy, they are rightly required in a democratic state to be accountable and transparent in relation to the public and policy-makers.

Higher education institutions are responsible for

- Students, who now make up about a third of any age-group, a proportion which is set to rise further,
- The quality of teaching, studies and degrees, because those applying for a university place and students, just like the employment market, expect

teaching and degrees to conform with the very latest developments in research and development,

- The quality of research, because although higher education institutions have long lost their research monopoly, they are training the new generation of academics for all sectors of society,
- The development of science and the future shaping of industry and society in an increasingly knowledge and thus science-based society, because all these higher education institutions are the place in Germany where the sciences are represented along their whole breadth. They are therefore fundamentally predestined to take up the problems and issues that are regarded as pressing in society,
- Careful handling of the lives of young people,
- Efficient use of the resources provided from taxpayers' money.

As institutions, higher education establishments are also responsible for creating and preserving the scope for science and scientists. Science, defined as the expectation of the unexpected, leads to new insights and findings frequently on the periphery and interfaces of traditional disciplines or even contrary to the prevailing view of the scientific community. Creating and providing the freedom to develop are paramount tasks of higher education institutions and their governing bodies. The drive for efficiency and evaluation must not, however, eliminate the freedom enjoyed by open-minded thinkers.

However, it cannot be denied that the complex system of individual higher education institutions and higher education institutions as a whole can only benefit from the introduction and continuation of the evaluation process aimed at assuring and improving quality.

Evaluation can cover all areas and all tasks of the higher education institution, meaning research, teaching, training of up-and-coming academics, academic continuing education, services and management.

The methods of evaluation have now been “standardised” with internal and external evaluation as well as subsequent agreement between the higher education institution’s governing body and the departments on changes to be made.

The goals of evaluation are varied but equally important:

- Evaluation as a process that relaunches the discussion between teachers and between teachers and students about the teaching situation;

- Evaluation as a process that promotes awareness of the need for quality assurance in departments and higher education institutions;
- Evaluation as a process of improved coordination of the course organisation and content;
- Evaluation as a process and a contribution towards strengthening or enhancing the teaching skills of lecturers;
- Evaluation as a process for strengthening self-regulation within higher education institutions, which was previously discharged (or was supposed to be) at a cooperative level for the most part;
- Evaluation as a process whose results provide an insight at least into resource distribution within higher education institutions;
- Evaluation as a process and integral part of ongoing strategic planning.

At least the last two points show the possible consequences of evaluation. Even if there is significant tension between the goals of open consultation, on the one hand, and financial consequences, on the other, which if the financial consequences are overstressed can lead to strategic behaviour with adverse effects on honesty in and acceptance of evaluation, higher education institutions cannot in view of their financial position ignore the results of internal and external evaluation in day-to-day and long-term higher education, decision-making and resource allocation policies.

Here the question arises as to the long-term prospects for the development of higher education. How can higher education institutions best fulfil their role given the well-known general framework? The defining elements in the future development of higher education are individuality, an interdisciplinary approach and internationality:

- The individuality of the individual higher education institution and of the individual department by means of diversification in autonomy and responsibility. In view of the wide-ranging requirements, diversification within science and the cost of maintaining the scientific community, higher education institutions can fulfil their tasks only through diversification among higher education institution types and among higher education institutions. This is possible only by deciding what should be classed as a priority and what is of lesser importance. Diversification means ultimately creating an image and a focus for both higher education institution types and the individual higher education institution.
- Interdisciplinary approach, i.e. interdisciplinary teaching and studies, research, training of up-and-coming academics, continuing education and

on this basis the services in the transfer of knowledge and technology. It will not do that the task of interlinking and condensing specialisations in research, which have to be imparted and acquired in teaching and studies as basic knowledge and methodology, is passed on or left up to the students alone. As a seat of research and teaching, the university in particular is obliged to draw the logical conclusions for teaching from specialisation and an interdisciplinary approach in research. This is all the more true bearing in mind the dramatic changes in employment market requirements in recent years. Higher education institutions are expected to produce not specialists ready to practise their relevant professions but generalists who can be deployed in many areas, are familiar with the languages of the various sciences and able to communicate between the different sciences.

- Internationality in all fields of reference including the mobility of students, academics and administrators. The historical upheaval of the past 20 years, the development of information and communications technology as well as the development of science in the face of international competition, the globalisation of the employment market, in which university graduates – and thus indirectly the higher education institution itself – have to prove their worth, and the growing together of the European Union and the scientific community into a “Global Village”
 - all these factors mean that higher education institutions will become increasingly internationalised in future. This internationality extends to services and to administration, which has to provide services for an internationally oriented scientific community. Internationality does not exclude a regional approach. However, a higher education institution which is regionally focused without any international links is in danger of becoming provincial in outlook.

The individualisation and differentiation, specialisation and interdisciplinary approach, internationality and regional responsibility of higher education institutions have already shown and will shortly demonstrate even more clearly that the traditional forms of safeguarding quality and standards in teaching, studies and degree qualifications through framework examination regulations, which to date have ensured the equality of degrees from all higher education institutions of the same type and the option for students of transferring to other higher education institutions including in other federal states, are no longer sufficient. This is especially true of the newly approved courses of study at universities and technically oriented higher education institutions culminating in Bachelor's

and Master's degrees. This problem was recognised early on and rectified through an amendment to Section § 9 of the Framework Act for Higher Education, which allows for the use of different quality assurance approaches in higher education degrees.

Accreditation procedures are frequently used as quality assurance tools abroad. Accreditation means formal recognition following a prior substantive check, with accreditation referring to institutions and courses of study. Accreditation is usually independent of direct state influence, although it is frequently in cooperation with state agencies the prerequisite for state action (e.g. the awarding of bursaries only for accredited courses, recognition of academic qualifications as a means of entering a profession).

Worthy of mention in this regard are the US accreditation system, which has been in existence for some time and is based on voluntary mergers between higher education institutions and professional associations, the five-yearly (re)accreditation of Grandes Ecoles and higher education institutions in France and the work of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee set up by statute in Hungary. Similar institutions can also be found in Bulgaria, Poland and Argentina. In Central and Eastern Europe accreditation institutions have been vested with wide-ranging and legally guaranteed independence from direct state influence in the post-Communist period in order to give quality assurance priority over other factors in the decision-making process relating to the recognition of courses of study and the qualifications gained upon their completion.

Based on the relevant application from the higher education institution, courses of study are scrutinised in terms of the (minimum) qualifications of staff, the skills to be imparted and existing equipment and facilities externally by written reports or through a visit by a group of experts and granted temporary accreditation on this basis. When courses of study are introduced, a temporary accreditation is granted on the basis of an expert assessment. In the case of accreditations for longer periods albeit always limited in duration, the professional success of graduates is taken into account if such data are available. The following in particular are taken into account as criteria for accreditation:

- Minimum quality requirements and international comparability of curricula including the development and organisation of studies, certificates of achievement and examinations;
- Professional skills of graduates thanks to a concise course concept in terms of the studies' objective;

- Staffing requirements for the course of study as well as accommodation, equipment and material provision.

Accreditation is also intended to bring about transparency, guarantee procedural reliability, safeguard (minimum) quality and thus allow student mobility both nationally and internationally as well as guaranteeing the recognition of degrees.

The establishment of Bachelor, Baccalaureate, Master's or Magister courses of study in Germany depends with regard to the European Union on nationwide recognition of course certificates, examination results and final examinations. This makes nationwide accreditation of Bachelor/ Baccalaureate and Master's/Magister courses of study unavoidable. An application for accreditation should firstly be assessed by external experts in a written procedure or through a visit to the relevant location by a group of experts and then be decided on by an accreditation commission. The assessment should where necessary take into account the results of external evaluations already carried out. Based on the ruling of the accreditation committee, the federal state or higher education institution can authorise the introduction of the course of study.

In order to ensure nationwide recognition of the accredited courses of study and avoid provincialisation or inappropriate influences on accreditation, a nationwide accreditation commission should be formed consisting of academics, practising professionals (including the liberal professions), students and representatives of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) and of the Conference of Rectors and Presidents of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions (HRK). The KMK and HRK are holding discussions on this matter based on an initiative from the KMK. If decisions are taken swiftly, it will be possible to grant accreditation to courses for the 1999/2000 academic year.

Higher education institutions face competition and responsibilities. Competition from rival institutions does not release them from their joint responsibility for science, the younger generation and careful handling of taxpayers' money. Higher education institutions must take seriously and exercise their right to autonomy and responsibility in evaluation and accreditation so as to safeguard and improve quality, define minimum standards and thus make it clear that as an integral part of the public infrastructure and provision for the future they require the appropriate political and financial priority.

Accreditation of institutions
and study programs in higher education -
Experiences in the USA
Dr. Charles M. Cook

It is a pleasure to stand before you today and share with you some thoughts about the experience in the United States with accreditation. I also very much appreciate the opportunity for professional conversation and to exchange ideas with individuals here in Rostock. For a number of years I have been a student of efforts among universities abroad to create and implement mechanisms for external evaluation. Given my profession of now nearly two decades, it is fascinating to watch these efforts and flattering to be asked occasionally offer some observations and suggestions. I am not sure of what the value of my talk will be to you, but I am very much pleased to have the opportunity to view the struggles here too –“struggles” is probably the right term – with what I have come to see as a universal set of key issues concerning evaluation and accreditation.

The title of this conference is a question: “Viel Lärm um nichts?” “Much ado about nothing?” Can anyone seriously doubt the answer? Is it possible as the 20th century draws to a close to deny the fact that one of the most significant phenomena affecting higher education is a multitude of efforts directed toward the evaluation or assessment of institutional quality? As a result, since the early 1980s, in response to loudly voiced demands for change, higher education nearly everywhere has been undergoing a fundamental paradigm shift in terms of how quality is defined, assessed, assured, and we hope improved. We are experiencing a quality movement; in a word, quality has become a growth industry in higher education. It is not something that is going to go away in the near term. The question then to me is not whether this is much to do about nothing, but rather how best to respond to this new reality in a way that will enhance and strengthen your institutions of higher learning.

Joining the quality crusade somewhat late affords you the opportunity to learn from the successes and failures of others; lessons of both types exist in plentiful supply. This brings me to my task today, affording some understanding of our system of accreditation in the United States in the hope that you might glean something from our experience which is

applicable here. There are, of course, dangers in such an exercise. The American model, which I would argue on the whole has been successful, is in its detail profoundly reflective of our unique system of higher education and more broadly our culture. The same would be true of any effective quality assurance mechanism. Thus, it would seem to me that instead of proposing a model of accreditation of limited applicability anywhere else, it might be more useful to spend my few moments with you providing a critical description of what we do and in the end suggesting some principles drawn from our lengthy experience that might be worth your pondering.

First some context may be useful. The American system of higher education is marked by two fundamental characteristics: size and diversity. We have over 3200 degree granting institutions and their range by type is greater than Europeans would think should be included in higher education

.. two year community colleges, undergraduate liberal art institutions, graduate professional schools of all sorts, research universities, though that list does no more than to begin to suggest the compass of our educational universe. Somewhat more than half of these institutions are independent –that is receive no direct public funding – though more students attend publicly supported colleges and universities. Over half of the students finishing high school this year in the United States will attend a tertiary institution in the coming year, though the average age of a college student in the United States has steadily increased in recent years and now approaches 30, and as an expression of this fact, the number of part-time students is growing.

Higher education in the United States is throughout a remarkably competitive industry, the result of its relative autonomy within a decentralized federal structure, the large number of independent institutions, our strong cultural incentives for the enterprising, and the American belief that a largely unfettered market place is more productive of social good than interventionist state regulation. Our system of accreditation permits and encourages this competition. Historically it was invented because of the absence of state involvement in higher education and, provided it continues to do its job well, its existence precludes significant state intervention.

The role of government in terms of quality assurance and oversight of American higher education is quite limited. Washington, though there is a Department of Education, has no direct powers of control, though it has

sought to use the billions of federal dollars available for individual student grants and loans as a means of indirect influence, The federal government fundamentally depends on accreditation as its primary quality indicator, but there are no national standards. While higher education is a direct responsibility of each of our fifty states, their intervention compared to what has been the European norm is also limited; the states too depend on accreditation for basic quality assurance. While all institutions must be licensed or chartered, which is a state responsibility, for most independent institutions this does not provide a basis for ongoing oversight or quality assurance except in extraordinary circumstances. Indeed, some of our leading universities benefit from colonial charters, making them, in their mind, totally free as an educational enterprise from state involvement. Even among public institutions, many of whom refer to themselves as only “publicly assisted” reflective of the fact that less than half their support comes directly from the state, there is also remarkable autonomy in law and no less importantly by practice. (Large public universities with their prestige, their large number of loyal alumni, and football teams are powerful entities in their own right with significant political influence.)

It is our system of accreditation which provides basic quality assurance within what must be seen from the outside as chaos. Simply put, accreditation is a status granted to institutions and programs found to meet or exceed standards designed to measure educational quality. Accreditation, in effect, confers a basic legitimacy on institutions. While one of its fundamental purposes is quality assurance, accreditation processes are designed in such a way as to encourage the improvement of institutional quality, its other basic purpose. Indeed, I would suggest that the most important product of accreditation is improvement.

Accreditation is private and non-governmental. It is carried out by independent not-for-profit entities, the members of which are the accredited institutions or programs.

Accreditation is non-regulatory or self-regulatory. It is the accredited entities themselves who establish and enforce the standards of quality which accredited institutions and programs are committed to abide by. This commitment to self-regulation is built on the proposition that given the singular character and special role of higher education, societies are best served if our colleges and universities individually and collectively manage their own affairs.

It is often said that accreditation is voluntary, and in a way it is. There is no requirement that institutions need it to exist. However, accreditation is so written into law and regulation in the United States as the chief indicator of quality (e.g., only individuals graduating from accredited institutions may be licensed to teach, it provides basis for the transfer of academic credit from one institution to another and admission into graduate school, employers typically hire only graduates from accredited institutions, and no parents would allow their child to attend a non-accredited institution) that it is in practice mandatory. As a result, there are almost no unaccredited institutions in the United States.

Accreditation in the United States is a mature system of quality assurance. Generally speaking, in its present form, American accreditation has existed for about a half century, though it is by no means resistant to change; its history has been one of growth and adaptation in response to a dynamic system of higher education. I would argue that our form of accreditation as our primary system of quality assurance, being non-governmental, non-regulatory, is a condition, though not a cause, which has permitted and encouraged this institutional dynamism which others would like to emulate.

We have two forms of accreditation: institutional accreditation and specialized or professional accreditation. While they share values and approaches, their unit of analysis is different. Institutional accreditation encompasses entire universities; accreditation encompasses the whole entity, but not anyone of its parts specifically. It is carried out by several agencies, each quite autonomous, which cover separate geographical regions; the term regional accreditation is synonymous with institutional accreditation. For example, the agency or commission that I direct, has jurisdiction over the 200 colleges and universities in the six state New England region. For some, mostly undergraduate colleges, this is their only form of accreditation which is their sole form of external quality assurance.

Specialized or professional accreditation is program specific. That is, these agencies, and there are about 50 of them, accredit specific academic programs primarily in professional or applied areas such as law, medicine, teaching, social work, clinical psychology, even business administration. The traditional arts and sciences, e.g., history, philosophy, languages, biology, other forms of psychology, do not have separate accreditation agencies; their quality is assured through institutional accreditation.

While I will spend a few moments talking about each of these types of accreditation separately, they do have some things in common. Organizationally, accreditation agencies are quite similar. They are not-for-profit entities, administered by small paid staffs. A board elected by the accredited institutions or programs provide oversight, determine evaluation criteria and policy, review evaluations and make decisions about accreditation. The actual work of evaluation is undertaken by volunteers who are most often peer academics.

The accreditation process, generally speaking, is similar among all accreditors. Institutions or programs are asked first to engage in self-examination against the criteria or standards for accreditation. This is designed as a searching and meaningful exercise whose goal is not merely to provide a report to the accrediting body, but also to encourage the institution to identify and address deficiencies. The completion of the self-study is followed by an evaluation by a team of peers whose task is to assess fulfilment of accreditation standards by validating the content of the self study report. Team size depends on the size and complexity of the institution. In our region a team may include as few as four or five or as many as 10 to 15 evaluators. The team, which undertakes a visit to the campus, prepares a written report of its findings which is then reviewed by the accrediting commission, again made up of volunteer peers, who make a decision about program or institutional accreditation.

Accreditation is cyclical; comprehensive reviews occur regularly every several years. For institutional accreditation, the period between such visits is a decade and among the specialized accreditors, it is typically somewhat shorter. In granting or reaffirming accreditation, and it is through such actions that the accountability function is expressed, these commissions will specify the timing of the next evaluation and often identify matters of concern to be addressed in the interim. In cases where concerns are serious, reports may be called for and evaluations on progress in addressing identified concerns may also be required. The decision about granting or reaffirming the status of accreditation and its cyclical nature give meaning to the process of self-study and evaluation.

Let me now spend a few moments talking about institutional or regional accreditation. The object of analysis, the accredited entity, is the institution as a whole. The criteria applied, given the wide focus of evaluation and the diversity among our member institutions, are broad; they are mission-

driven and open-ended. While spelled out in detail, those criteria essentially ask four questions:

1. Does the institution have an appropriate mission?
2. Does it have the necessary resources and effective management to accomplish its mission?
3. Is the institution demonstrably accomplishing its mission?
4. Does the institution give evidence of its ability to accomplish its mission into the future?

Historically, the second of these four questions which addresses the input side of the evaluative equation received the most attention in our processes. However, in recent years, the measurement of student learning outcomes has become increasingly important, not so much as a change of emphasis, but rather as an additional emphasis.

Included in the application of these criteria are all aspects of the institution: planning, governance, finance, academic programs, faculty, student services, the library, even institutional integrity.

There are no normative standards. Obviously, these open-ended criteria call for the application of considerable professional judgement, something we are quite comfortable with. By design and application, they permit incredible variety, even among institutions of the same type, and encourage experimentation. It should also be noted that these are minimum standards, though there are implicit and explicit expectations that institutions will seek to improve themselves. Yes, these criteria result in significant and substantive variation among accredited institutions in terms of traditional aspects of quality. While the institution is accredited as a whole, it is understood that some programs will be stronger than others. This is recognized and accepted; we engage in no self-delusion whatsoever in the United States that all our universities are the same. And we have a typical American answer to the question of how one therefore distinguishes among accredited institutions? The market place sorts it out.

Evaluation undertaken by institutional accreditors, is necessarily broad brushed. The self-study report, limited in our case to 100 pages, is an exercise in generalization. Our visiting committees can at most do a kind of sampling with the evaluative emphasis frankly varying somewhat among accreditation reviews at different institutions; they lack a kind of bureaucratic consistency, the result of non-professional peer participation

and a process that recognizes the fact that different things are important at a given moment at different universities. Thus accreditation reports of evaluation committees, while they all reflect certain essentials, are not exhaustive and comprehensive renditions assessing the institution in detail. Rather, they often can be seen as a kind of management audit. Furthermore, they do not engage in comparisons of one institution against others; each is evaluated on its own merits against mission-based standards for accreditation.

Institutions, even our most prestigious universities, take the accreditation process with seriousness, even though their accreditation is unquestioned. It is the chief executive officer and the academic vice president who have the institutional ownership of self-study and they are recipients of the results of the evaluation. They have a strong tendency to utilize the process to accomplish their own goals, that is they leverage the institution with accreditation. Our criteria and processes certainly permit this and we encourage it as a way to deriving benefit from the process. Furthermore, given the size and complexity of particularly large universities, there is a need to focus attention if the process is to have meaning. Thus, for example, Yale University in its upcoming review, will give particular attention to the undergraduate experience rather than its professional schools or other matters.

From the public's perspective, accreditation is a pass/fail system. An institution is either accredited or not. The results of evaluation are otherwise confidential, unless the institution chooses to disclose them. Apart from accreditation itself, we provide no consumer information; we do not rank institutions, nor do the professional accreditors rank programs. This, of course, is done in the private sector, chiefly among various news magazines, which are enormously popular; an example of the market place sorting things out. (For those interested, US News and World Report, published its college and university rankings recently and they are available on the internet: <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/home.htm>.) I note that this has caught on as a way to sell magazines in Germany.

I mentioned a moment ago that while mature, our accreditation system has had to be adaptable given the dynamic nature of our system of higher education and the need to continue to demonstrate our effectiveness as a way of ensuring legitimacy. The two most important challenges are technology and the resultant rise of distance learning and the related need

to make student learning outcomes the central component in measuring institutional effectiveness and a tool to encourage institutional improvement. These are enormous topics in and of themselves and I am sorry that I don't have the time to delve into them further.

Let me now turn some brief attention to professional or specialized accreditation and its implications for institutions. I mentioned that there were more than 50 accrediting agencies which focus only on specific programs, and mostly professional related programs – law, teaching, medicine, etc. These agencies are creatures of these professions, mostly organizationally a component of national professional bodies, and reflect a need to assure that graduates meet or exceed certain professional standards. For some professions, the successful completion of a professional program is a prerequisite to practice.

Whereas institutional accreditation is owned internally by the university's leadership, professional accreditation is in the possession of the dean or department head where the program resides. Because the loss of accreditation can be very damaging in our competitive system, program heads often use the accreditation process to leverage more resources from the institution. Functioning not unlike medieval guilds, the agencies themselves are seen as using their processes to advance the interest of the profession and its teaching academics quite apart from quality assurance needs, often seen as being in defiance of the overall objectives of the institution. This has been aided by the fact that until fairly recently, the standards of specialized agencies have been rigid and specific. This has resulted in historic tension between specialized accreditors and institutions, the latter believing that the former engage in a form of robbery under the guise of improving quality which hampers overall effective planning and resource allocation in keeping with broad institutional goals. I include these observations as a cautionary note specifically for those interested in developing program specific evaluation processes.

It is also fair to note that at least part of the specialized accreditation community has endeavored to address the criticisms levelled against them, mostly by relinquishing their once cherished numerical standards, replacing them with outcomes based criteria. This is true, for example, of library science and engineering, professions more known for their quantitative orientation than a qualitative prospective.

Before I finish with some principles that might be drawn from the American experience, let me acknowledge that what I have done here is engage in generalization, even over simplification. Thus, it may be difficult to appreciate the nuances and complexities of what is a very sophisticated mechanism. For those interested, I would encourage you to follow up by visiting the various accreditation web sites suggested in the handout.

To the principles then:

- Institutions of higher education should regulate themselves. This is, I believe, the primary lesson of the American experience.
- The primary purpose of self-regulation should be improvement, and within a self-regulatory framework, improvement is best achieved when initiated as an internal process. Quality cannot be mandated, it must come from within. But, there needs to be an incentive to improve and at least a general perspective on what constitutes quality and its improvement.
- Meaningful assurance about institutional or program quality is best developed through a scheme of external evaluation and the best scheme of external evaluation is based upon a self-regulatory model or peer evaluation. Self study alone, is not enough. External review creates at once an incentive and a means of meaningful measurement.
 - External evaluation should be keyed to existing efforts at self-study or internal evaluation and in doing so foster excellence while also providing assurance about program or institutional quality. The importance of this sort of coordination of effort should be obvious.
 - External evaluation should lead to a judgement about quality, some form of accreditation, and there should be follow up evaluative activities. Evaluation in and of itself, is not assurance. There needs to be some mechanism to certify that is to assure that quality exists, preferably in a public sort of way.
 - Systems of external evaluation designed to provide public quality assurance should be ultimately accountable to the public they serve. Higher education exists to achieve a public good. While I don't believe that quality is encouraged and enhanced through detailed public involvement, ultimately it is essential as a means of accountability, to demonstrate through the results of an evaluation/accreditation system that quality exists and can be sustained.

World Wide Web Sites Related to Accreditation, Assessment, and Distance Education

Here are provided the addresses for numerous accreditation related web sites in the United States. Those interested can use this marvellous tool, the internet, to learn more. Because the measurement of student learning outcomes and using technology for distance learning are pertinent to accreditation, I have also included a number of sites related to these topics.

Accreditation Related Web Sites in the United States:

Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools/Commission on Higher Education: <http://www.msache.org>

New England Association of Schools and Colleges/Commission on Institutions of Higher Education: <http://www.neasc.org/>

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools/Commission on Institutions of Higher Education: <http://www.ncacihe.org>

Southern Association of Schools and Colleges/Commission on Colleges:
<http://www.sacs.org>

Western Association of Schools and Colleges/Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities: <http://www.wascweb.org/>

A list of specialized or professional accrediting bodies may be found at:
<http://www.nait.org/aspa/>

The national higher education organization for accreditation in the United States is the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA):
<http://www.chea.org>

Sample university self-study reports available on the Web:

Brown University: [http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Accreditation-University of Massachusetts at Amherst:](http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Accreditation-University_of_Massachusetts_at_Amherst)

<http://www.umass.edu/oapa/selfstudy/>

Central Connecticut State University:

<http://www.ccsu.ctstateu.edu/planning/neasc/default.htm>

University of Vermont (a work in progress):

<http://www.uvm.edu/~provost/accreditation/>

Links to College and University Home Pages:

This is a collection of links to the home pages of institutions of higher learning throughout the world:

<http://www.mit.edu:8001/people/cdemello/univ.html>

This list contains only links to home pages for colleges and universities in the United States: http://www.clas.ufl.edu/CLAS/american_universities.html

Assessment Related Web Sites:

These Web sites provide numerous links related to the assessment of student learning outcomes:

<http://www.ga.unc.edu/UNCGA/assessment/resources.html>

<http://www.ericae.net/>

<http://www.ohiou.edu/~insres/assessments/url.html>

<http://apollo.gmu.edu/~jmilam/air95.html>

Distance Education Web Sites:

Here are several search tools for information about distance education and to locate online courses and programs:

<http://www.caso.com/>

<http://www.yahoo.com/Education/>

http://excite.netscape.com/education/continuing_education/distance_learning/

<http://www.cisnet.com/~cattales/Deducation.html>

This Web site is designed to provide useful consumer information for individuals interested in taking course work online:

http://www.drake.edu/consumer_guide.html

Individuals wishing to assess their readiness to participate in online or computer assisted course work may wish to take the survey available at this

Web site: http://www.lesley.edu/online_learning/readiness/home.html

Summary of following discussion Tanja Jeschke M.A.

The discussion in the Plenary Meeting following the lectures by Dr. Lange and Dr. Cook provided the opportunity for questions to both speakers. The questions concentrated especially on the development of the accreditation procedure and its consequences in the United States.

Dr. Lange did not accept the objection that making higher education institutions responsible for their students and the success of their studies was presumptuous and wrong. He quoted the example of a lack of timetable coordination for lectures in some higher education institutions and the circumstance that failed exams could not be repeated until the next exam period. Thus, students often had to plan in an extra semester, which was irresponsible given young peoples' careful husbandry of life. The higher education institutions should take their responsibilities much more seriously in this respect, without dictating to students.

Dr. Lange also spoke in favour of seeing the setting of minimum standards for accreditation as primarily a task of the higher education institutions. Disputes could be expected within departments and between higher education institutions against the background of the difficult consensus-building process in relation to recommendations of the Association of Rectors and Presidents of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions in the Federal Republic of Germany (HRK) on the restructuring of courses. The higher education institutions had to confront this debate, however, as they would have no grounds to complain if other institutions with less knowledge regulated in their place what they themselves refused to take in hand.

Dr. Cook exemplified with a concrete example the tensions within higher education institutions which could be produced by the accreditation of individual programmes. Thus some years ago the University of Iowa Law School had been accredited with the result, among other things, that a new Law School building had to be built using the resources of the university. The building had been constructed at the cost of equally pressing building plans of another faculty, which had, however, lost the argument because there were no plans to accredit its courses.

Dr. Lüthje pointed out that thinking about standards in Germany and in systems in continental Europe ran along the lines of abstractly defined and similarly recognisable and applicable standards for everyone. In the Anglo-Saxon system, however, standards were seen as a consensus between people. This was the secret of peer review: the peers could not precisely define the standards but had a feeling for a decided view of quality standards. The conscious reliance on the subjective assessment of persons considered to be competent lay at the heart of this procedure. This point required the greatest rethinking in the German system, which always immediately thought in terms of regulations and standards as tools for grasping reality – at the same time mistrusting what everyone does constantly: developing and expressing a personal opinion.

Dr. Cook reported on American institutions which, independently of any outside influence, themselves developed standards for accreditation – in a kind of “autonomous christening”. The peers as individuals took subjective decisions and the accreditation institution did not set any kind of targets – particularly as far as programme accreditation was concerned. In the accreditation, the individual higher education institutions were measured against the extent to which they had achieved the targets which they themselves had – adequately – set. The experts generally acted on a voluntary and honorary basis in the accreditation procedure without any financial compensation. Apart from that, a certain amount of money was available for institutional accreditation. It happened only rarely that accreditation was rejected or that conditions were imposed. This was not due to the low standards, but because weak points were recognised early on in the accreditation process and measures for quality improvement taken; the accreditation thus helped to achieve the standards it set. The managements of higher education institutions used these accreditation procedures consciously to put some life into their institution and introduce processes of change. Dr. Cook described evaluation as the process in the accreditation procedure at the end of which stood the accreditation stamp. He said that one problem of European evaluation procedures was that controlled follow up was missing. The institutions lacked the means and resources to draw the consequences from the evaluation. There were, nevertheless, such systems of evaluation also in the United States, which were aimed solely at quality assurance in individual departments without the intention of accreditation.

In response to the question whether there were ways in the United States of controlling the quality of an institution by means of the salaries of

academic lecturers, Dr. Cook said that there was no possibility of sacking bad lecturers, but that, conversely, the attempt was made to bind elites to an institution, and thus ensure above-average quality, by offering top salaries.

Far removed from an accreditation bureaucracy feared in the discussion, Dr. Cook saw the ideal accreditation procedure in terms of higher education institutions as learning communities which were concerned with achieving quality in a continuous process involving all members and which developed in line with changing requirements. One of the aims of the accreditation process was to develop such a quality awareness.

Nevertheless, evaluation and accreditation should not become the sole purpose in life. Higher education institutions still had to devote themselves to other tasks as well.

Arguments relating to the topic of the accreditation of courses of study in Germany

Presidents and Rectors of the Consortium of Universities in Northern Germany

What is accreditation?

1. Accreditation in the higher education sector means the recognition of a higher education institution or a course of study under a regulated procedure. It is used, for instance, in the USA to ensure that higher education institutions adhere to minimum quality standards in their educational services, student supervision, equipment and facilities and staff qualifications.
2. Accreditation in Germany's higher education sector is aimed at safeguarding the quality of new courses of study within the national framework and in line with international standards.
3. In addition, this procedure allows higher education institutions to raise the profile of their courses of study. In order to promote the development of diversity, accreditation is intended to set minimum quality standards for courses of study in Germany too. These minimum standards must apply to the courses of study on offer in all federal states.
4. There is no link . either organisational or staff-related . between accreditation and evaluation of courses of study. Accreditation seeks to ascertain whether minimum quality standards are being observed and responds to each application with a yes or no. Evaluation, on the other hand, is aimed at helping departments to achieve maximum quality. The recommendations are usually subtly differentiated and geared to specific measures.
5. The results of evaluation form an integral part of the development of the higher education institution or course of study. The proof of ongoing evaluation for quality assurance purposes also represents accountability for the responsible use of taxpayers' money.

Which courses of study are to be accredited?

6. In the short term, those courses of study at universities and technically oriented higher education institutions that are being redesigned as Bachelor's and Master's degrees are to be subject to accreditation. In the long term, all courses are to be included.

7. For the introduction of Bachelor's final examinations in courses of study already approved, authorisation of the changed examination regulations by the federal state is regarded as initial accreditation. After ten years an application for re-accreditation must then be made. The same applies to courses of study with Bachelor's/Master's final examinations which have already been approved and to cases where the Master's final examination is added to the academic diploma or Magister degree (where necessary in cooperation with foreign higher education institutions).

How is the accreditation procedure to be organised?

8. Accreditation is the responsibility of higher education institutions, this being the only way to further improve quality standards while keeping them up to date and to raise the profile of individual higher education institutions and courses of study.

9. The right of federal states to authorise courses of study focuses on the decision as to whether new courses of study can be financed against the background of academic planning in the respective state. If the financial foundations are in place and the accreditation commission has no subject-specific objections, the relevant course of study can be authorised. For the federal states (and the governing bodies of the higher education institutions if the federal states have ceded their authorisation rights) the decision of the accreditation commission is binding.

10. The higher education institutions (universities and technically oriented higher education institutions) apply for accreditation. The application is examined by a commission made up of representatives of the major subject groups, higher education institution governing bodies, students and practitioners. The commission has the option of granting accreditation, attaching conditions to such accreditation or rejecting the application.

11. During its examination of the application, the commission consults academics with expertise in the relevant subjects. These experts base their judgement on submitted written material. As a rule, they should also hold consultations on the spot. They present to the commission a substantiated recommendation relating to the decision on accreditation.

12. On-the-spot consultations can be dispensed with if the department running the course of study was evaluated in recent years by external experts and submits the evaluation results together with the application for accreditation.

13. In order to assist the accreditation procedure, an administrative office will be set up to meet the commission's every need flexibly.

14. Accreditation is granted for ten years. An application for reaccreditation must be submitted before the expiry of this term. A decision on whether to grant accreditation must be made within six months.

Which minimum standards and / or test criteria are to be applied?

– Initial reflections –

15. Minimum standards and test criteria for the accreditation of courses of study must apply to all courses in all federal states and must therefore be laid down by a central authority (e.g. the Conference of Rectors and Presidents of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions – HRK).

16. On the basis of initial reflections on this issue, minimum standards for courses of study in all subjects and test criteria ought to be formulated for those points that require different subject-specific answers. Especially from the point of view of seeking to promote new interdisciplinary and/or activity-oriented courses of study, it seems advisable to submit open questions to the experts in the accreditation procedure. The extent to which standardisations for the minimum requirements in terms of provision of equipment and quality are achieved during the initial years will be observed.

The minimum standards are as follows:

17. The formally and legally required organisational criteria for conducting examinations must be adhered to (in accordance with the General Provisions for Diploma and Magister Examination Regulations and with the decisions of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and

Cultural Affairs of the Lander in the Federal Republic of Germany - KMK and HRK).

18. Students must also be able to transfer from new courses of study to other existing courses or to higher education institutions at home and abroad (where necessary with stipulated requirements).

19. The ability to complete the new courses of study within the stipulated period must be ensured.

20. A Bachelor's degree can be attained after six semesters; the final examination comprises a written paper. Master's courses, for which a bachelor's degree is the requirement, do not last longer than two academic years as a rule, culminating in an independent academic paper (also to guarantee equality with the diploma and Magister final examinations).

21. The form in which regular quality checks (evaluations) are incorporated into a course of study must be explained. At longer intervals, the judgement and advice of experts will also be sought during the quality checks.

The test criteria for the experts in the accreditation procedure are in particular:

22. Assessment of the quality of the submitted curriculum from (subject-specific) academic standpoints;

23. Integration of the courses into the relevant research activities, especially for Master's degrees;

24. Assessment of the practical relevance of the courses (practice-oriented, demand aspects);

25. Assessment of the international acceptance of the new courses;

26. staffing as well as advisory, supervisory and examination services; including

- in assessment of course staff (qualifications of academic staff etc.),
- an assessment of course equipment and facilities (libraries, laboratories, PC provision etc.).

27. The minimum standards are to be examined at regular intervals. New standards must be decided upon within the HRK.

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