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Abstract

Higher education accreditation frameworks typically consider academic staff quality a key element. This article embarks on an empirical study of what academic staff quality means, how it is measured, and how different aspects of staff quality relate to each other. It draws on the relatively nascent Portuguese experience with study programme accreditation. The study provides an analysis of staff quality in public administration education, an area of massive expansion in recent years. Several dimensions of quality are assessed (staff qualifications, research intensity, disciplinary orientation, diversity, international orientation, professional orientation, and inbreeding) along with the interactions that occur between them. A statistical analysis is made of the indicators for all 21 study programmes in the area of public administration, involving 236 academics in six public universities. We find that, in general, the quality of academic staff complies with standards, but there are issues regarding qualifications and research intensity that need to be addressed. The findings emphasise the need to uphold academic staff quality standards but call for policies to curtail possible gaming resulting from it. The article illustrates the relevance of analysing staff quality from an empirical point of view and its contribution to our understanding of how different quality accreditation processes function and their implications for how quality is achieved in higher education. (HRK / Abstract

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