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**Abstract**

The underlying paradigms that influence research on quality have remained alarmingly under-researched; this article analyses the constraints that a technical-rational approach for the study of quality in higher education imposes. Technical rationality has been the dominant paradigm that shapes research on quality in higher education. Alternatively, political and symbolic perspectives are discussed in order to conceptualise and frame future research in the study of higher education quality. This article concludes with a discussion of the implications of different approaches. It is argued that the study of quality in higher education needs to be revitalised by new conceptual perspectives that go beyond technical-rational assumptions.(HRK / Abstract übernommen)