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Abstract

There is a growing belief that higher education institutions should nurture a 'quality culture' in which structural/managerial and cultural/psychological elements act in synergy to continuously improve education. Notwithstanding the positive connotation of the 'quality culture' concept, its exact configuration remains subject to debate. A realist review was conducted to identify inhibiting and promoting organisational context elements impacting quality culture, its working mechanisms and associated outcomes. Leadership and communication were identified as being of key importance in binding structural/managerial and cultural/psychological elements. Leaders are central 'drivers' of quality culture development through their ability to influence resource allocation, clarify roles and responsibilities, create partnerships and optimise people and process management. Adequate communication is considered a prerequisite to diffuse quality strategies and policies, evaluate results and identify staff values and beliefs. It is proposed that the working mechanisms of quality culture comprise increased staff commitment, shared ownership, empowerment and knowledge. Associated outcomes related to these mechanisms are positive effects on staff and student satisfaction, continuous

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improvement of the teaching–learning process and student and teacher learning and development. Institutions striving for the development of a quality culture should best operate from a contingency approach, i.e. make use of quality management intervention approaches which are tailored to the organisational context. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Bendermacher, G. W. G., E-Mail, g.bendermacher@maastrichtuniversity.nl