

Quality Work at Copenhagen Business School – how to create a university quality culture

By Claus Nygaard and Bente Kristensenⁱ

Introduction

Copenhagen Business School (CBS) demonstrates its capacity for change through the development as a learning university. The term originates from the combination of the classic notion of the university as a forum for learning and knowledge and the modern concept of ‘the learning organization’ and is today one of the strategic priorities of CBS. CBS began its long journey of development as a learning university with continuous quality improvement and the creation of a quality culture in the mid-1990s. In the early 1990s one might characterize CBS as a teacher-led, didactic institution in which students had very high numbers of lectures a week with little in the way of interactive sessions; student-centred learning was not significant part of the learning process. The institution was also scattered around the city, in buildings many of which were not originally designed as learning environments and there was no noticeable student learning community. Over the last 15 years this has completely changed, yet there is no intention for the university to consider the ‘job done’. Continuous quality improvement adopting e.g. to the requirements of the Bologna Declaration about setting up learning outcomes for all study programmes strengthening the transparency and the employability of the graduates of CBS is still at the core of the quality work of the study boards at CBS. CBS has learned and continues to learn from experience both internally and externally. The problem with being a learning university is that it is a status that has constantly to be earned.

CBS participating in a Nordic competition

In 2005 Copenhagen Business School (CBS) was awarded the prize as the Nordic university with the best work in the area of quality. CBS participated in a competition hosted by the Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education (NOQA) (consisting of the national agencies FINHEEC of Finland, Högskoleverket of Sweden, NOKUT of Norway, and EVA of Denmark). Usually all five Nordic countries participate in the projects of NOQA, but in this particular competition, Iceland decided not to. Participating were Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Each national agency autonomously selected one national representative for the competition. Participating universities were: University of Kuopio, Finland; University of Uppsala, Sweden; Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway; and Copenhagen Business School, Denmark.

The jury for the competition consisted of an international panel of experienced quality and evaluation professionals: Professor Jethro Newton,

University College Chester, UK (Chair); Fiona Crozier, Deputy Director, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), UK; and Dr Rolf Heusser, Director, Centre of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities (OAQ), Switzerland. It was the task of the panel to select the “best” university in the sense that it was the one which could be used as a benchmark in quality work. On the basis of the available material, and taking account of the interviews and discussions conducted with each nominated institution, the international panel commended the quality system of CBS as an outstanding example of best practice. The following strengths were identified:

- a coherent quality system, systematically applied;
- an established quality culture;
- good involvement of stakeholders;
- the Learning Lab initiative and the students’ involvement in its inception and management;
- effective use of results from quality reviews and processes for the dual purpose of quality improvement and organisational learning;
- use of the above for opening up a high level of dialogue between staff and between staff and students;
- a strong focus on student outcomes;
- effective feedback loops;
- transparent information.

Figure 1: Identified strengths of the quality work at CBS
Source: Omar & Liuhanen (2005:27).

Development of a quality culture at CBS

This article describes the internal quality work of CBS, in order to shed light on some of the structures and processes that have helped to nurture the development of a quality culture across the business school. Arguing for the development of a quality culture, it seems natural to begin with a clarification of the notion itself. Much in line with the underlying conceptions of the European Quality Project (EUA, 2006), we see institutional quality as being closely linked to culture. Newton (2007:14) conceptualises quality as a “‘practiced’, ‘used’ and ‘experienced’” process, in contrast to compliance with a formalised system of predefined outcomes. We buy into such conceptions. To us quality is not a managerial concept of accountability, but a culturally shaped philosophy underlying everyday practices. It is so because everyday practices are embedded in and cannot be detached from the institutional culture. To create a quality culture in a university is to create a culture in which stakeholders (students and staff) engage in everyday practices in such ways that the outcome of the practices themselves becomes reflected parts of the very process of action. In a quality culture, stakeholders negotiate and choose their actions in consideration of overall systemic improvements, and not merely to fulfil or sub-optimize isolated goals. A quality culture is a culture where the practices of the institution are developed (or collaboratively co-created) with the ongoing aim of generating greater understanding of the relationships between resources, practices, and outcomes. Reflecting Argyris & Schön (1978), we can talk of a

culture in which double-loop learning is prominent, and where questioning one's preconceptions is not unusual. This is what we have systematically tried to create at CBS over a period of 15 years.

Leading roles in the quality work at CBS

We have to point to the fact that we – the authors – have taken a leading role in the shaping of structures and processes of quality enhancement and quality assurance at CBS. As pro-vice chancellor from 1994 to 2006, Bente Kristensen had overall responsibility for developing a large number of quality initiatives at CBS, based on the stakeholder-related concept of quality launched by Harvey and Green (1993). She also had responsibility for the university's participation in international audits, evaluations, accreditations and benchmarking programmes. As senior advisor and professor at CBS Learning Lab (an internal research-based centre for quality enhancement), Claus Nygaard has been involved in Quality Enhancement (QE) & Quality Assurance (QA) initiatives, such as curriculum development projects, accreditations, teacher training activities, and he has been a driving force in the formulation of CBS' Learning Strategy. Our views are therefore, naturally biased, and it is possible that there are structures and processes of QE and QA that we do not see, and others that we take for granted. The following is an overview of the QE and QA practices and the development of a quality culture at CBS.

Before turning to the case of CBS, however, a brief comment on QA and QE.

Perceptions of QE/QA

Creating a Quality Culture is closely connected to QE and QA. Quality enhancement is about improving or accentuating the quality of the teaching and learning processes and learning outcomes, the research output and quality initiatives which are related to service to society. Quality Assurance is about establishing mechanisms to provide guarantees that the quality of the internal processes, procedures and ultimately outcomes is appropriate. QE is usually internally driven, whereas QA usually is externally driven. Typical internally driven QE activities are the competence development of staff, relational management, quality seminars for staff, research and publications on quality-related issues such as TLA-processes, curriculum development and students' learning outcomes. Typical externally driven QA activities are external reviews, such as audits, evaluations or accreditations, the latter based on externally formulated standards or performance indicators. Table 1 shows the characteristics of QE and QA.

	Quality Enhancement (QE)	Quality Assurance (QA)
Definition	A process by which HEIs enhance the quality of their activities (research, education and services to society).	A process by which HEIs document the quality of their activities (research, education and services to society)
Key purpose	Improving quality.	Controlling quality. Demonstrating accountability and compliance.
Key driver	Internal: Management group / project groups of the HEI.	External: National or international QA-agencies or more supportive evaluation programmes often seeking to balance accountability and improvement
Type of pressure	Collegial or managerial pressure on HEIs for the internal integration of actors, processes and structures in relation to their activities.	Political pressure on HEIs to deliver accountability and external adaptation to rules and regulations in relation to their activities.
Key methods	Competence development of staff, creation of a learning organisation, relational management, work with values, creation of a quality culture.	External evaluation, audit, accreditation (means: self-evaluation, peer review, site visit, final report).

Table 1: Characteristics of QE and QA.

Source: Nygaard & Bramming (2009).

Since the early 1990s there has been a tension between quality assurance (for accountability) and quality enhancement or improvement. These have often been constructed as opposite ends of the same spectrum or dimension. However, they are more appropriately seen as two different dimensions: not in conflict or to be posited as ‘opposites’, but rather bound to each other in a relationship of tension. It is their underlying purposes which constitute the separate dimensions and which may be in conflict or at least have different goals (enhancement or improvement and accountability or compliance).

As the case of CBS shows, QA and QE are to be seen as complementary terms and practices; they both play an important role in the creation of a quality culture.

Perceptions of the university

To further understand our approach to creating a quality culture it is important to touch briefly upon our perception of the university as an organisation. Following the classic paradigms within organisational theory, the university can be seen as a designed structure. Perrow (1972) saw universities as bureaucracies, Mintzberg (1983) saw them as professional bureaucracies. In each case the university is seen as a “physical entity” that can be designed and controlled. It can be designed as a functioning hierarchy based on rules, procedures and regulations. According to this view, actions can be planned and outcomes can be measured, which means that the university must formulate goals, decide on means, and measure outputs. Ideally, this perception of the university as a designed structure implies that the university can be managed by objectives and optimised as a “machine”. This view is compatible with the requirements of QA.

An alternative perception of the university is that of the university as mindset. Here the university is a “social entity”, which cannot be designed and controlled. The university is socially constructed, which means that its functions are based on thoughts, dialogues and interpretations. This is very much in line with Morgan (1986), who introduced the concept of images of organisations and who showed the different impact of various perceptions of organisations, such as the vision of organisations as culture, political systems, brains, machines, and organisms. In the view of organisation as mindset, the ideas and opinions of the employees become central, and in order to “manage” universities, the ideas and views of the employees have to be changed. In fact, universities cannot be “managed” (in the traditional sense of management); managers of universities can nevertheless influence the mindset of their employees (and students). This perception is in line with the underlying philosophy behind QE.

In the case of CBS, it becomes apparent that we perceive the university as mindset. We work on creating norms and values that underpin the everyday practices leading to systematic QE. By “systematic”, we mean that the work on QE is continuously made explicit and reflected upon by key actors in the university.

About Copenhagen Business School

CBS is the largest business school in northern Europe. It was founded in 1917 as a private business school, and remained private until 1965, when it was integrated into the Danish national system of higher education. Today CBS, like seven other public universities in Denmark, receives its funding from the state. Key figures for CBS are presented in figure 2.

Student population	15,791
Full-time students (non-Danish citizens)	1,534
Full-time academic staff	427
Visiting professors	21
Part-time academic staff	707
PhD students	168
Administrative staff	548
Funding (million Euro)	127.7
Exchange agreements with foreign universities	360
Undergraduate study programmes	13
Graduate study programmes	27
Study programmes at Open university	9
Executive masters study programmes	11

Figure 2: Key figures for CBS (ultimo 2008).

CBS is a single faculty university, which means that quality work is concentrated within departments, research centres and study boards with a relatively similar academic focus, all centred on related aspects of business administration and business economics. CBS offers degree programmes at the following levels:

- BSc programmes (3 year full time undergraduate)
- MSc programs (2 year full time graduate)
- CBS Graduate Diploma programmes (2 year part time)
- CBS Executive programmes (1-2 year full time/part time)
- PhD programmes (3 year full time/5 year part time doctorate)

The overall aim of QE in CBS

Our quality work has three parallel and yet highly interwoven aims. First, on the organisational level, it aims at institutionalising a quality culture, in order to promote the development of CBS as a learning university. From years of experience and focus on quality, we have come to understand that QE needs to be deeply rooted in the organisation in order to overcome immediate obstacles such as shortfalls in resources, change in key personnel, etc. Second, on the personal level it aims at stimulating self-reflection and change management, which are important for promoting the exchange of ideas and experiences and for sharing good practice. Third, on the “product level” it aims to create study programmes that are second to none and that actively empower students, promote the development of higher order thinking skills, and enhance employability.

The third aim is not surprising: such outcome-based statements are the backbone of curricula at almost every university. The fact, however, that we actively promote the institutionalisation of aims at organisational and personal levels, shows that we are genuinely interested in developing processes of QE throughout the university.

To us, QE is about processes of improvement and not about outcome-based statements only. We view the capacity for continuous organisational renewal as a key requirement for building this kind of innovative learning environment for students and staff. The strategy depends on the development of new pedagogical methods, on the ability to combine research-based teaching and experience-based learning, on increasing the use of multimedia-aided learning, on focusing on mobilising students’ resources for the learning process, on project-based courses with interdisciplinary groups and on action learning programmes. For the organisation as a whole, the strategy depends on a commitment to continued quality development and to competence enhancement, on building external and internal networks, on creating an innovative organisational culture for all staff groups, and on encouraging venture spirit and testing new organisational principles.

As already mentioned, we perceive the organisation as a mindset. This is the case in CBS. CBS is very much driven by a Scandinavian philosophy of management, characterised by centrifugal power distribution, high employee autonomy, informal decision-making structures, personal network relations, and focus on group norms and values. This is in contrast to management through systems building, rules setting, and key performance indicators. In a culture with such decentralised structures as ours, personnel at all levels are responsible for implementing quality strategies and quality initiatives. We shall come back to this when we go through the different quality initiatives taken at CBS.

Perceiving the organisation as a mindset implies that we are open to the fact that key-stakeholders think of the university in different ways, have different reasons for engaging their lives in CBS, and undoubtedly have varied views of quality. It also implies that QE then very much becomes a bottom-up process. As a consequence, at CBS we do not have a central quality management system (such as ISO and APQP). We use, as we will show below, a stakeholder-related concept of quality as the backbone of CBS quality work, with a large number of different processes and structures leading to the continuous explication of and reflection of quality at the organisational, personal and product levels.

The overall concept of quality in CBS

Acknowledging that various stakeholders have different perceptions of the university and of quality, we base our quality work on a stakeholder-related concept of quality (Harvey & Green, 1993), according to which quality means different things to different people and is relative to both processes and outcomes. The widely differing conceptualisations of quality are grouped into five discrete but interrelated categories. Quality can be viewed as: 1) exceptional; 2) perfection; 3) fitness for purpose; 4) value for money; and 5) transformation. Since 1994, CBS has launched projects and quality activities within all five categories as part of its continuous quality improvement process. Figure 2 shows what can be called the “CBS’ Quality Circle”.

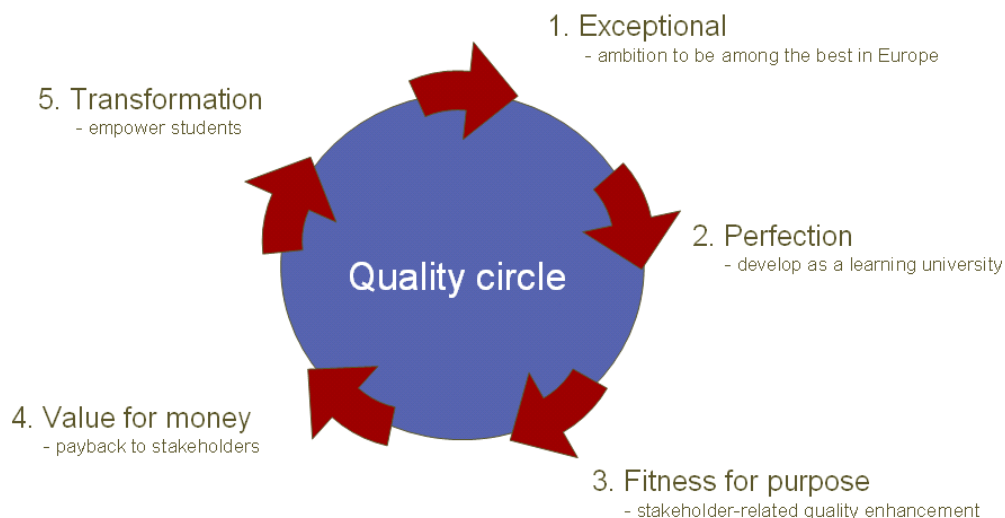


Figure 3: CBS' Quality Circle.

In our quality work at CBS, all perceptions of quality are equally important and in fact supplement each other quite well. We use this quality figure to address issues and aspects related to different processes and structures, as well as to different stakeholders. Here are some examples of how we use the different perceptions of quality to integrate stakeholders in the processes of QE and QA.

Perception 1: Quality as Exceptional

In our mission statement, we have formulated an ambition to be among the best higher education institutions in Europe. This relates to the notion of quality as exceptional. There are some obvious reasons for striving to be among the best: attracting students (national and international) at all levels; academic credibility; the creation of regional, national and international networks for research and teaching; to attract corporate partners; and to attract additional funding. Aiming to be among the best requires performance measurements, which can indicate how well we are doing. Accordingly, for the last 15 years our philosophy has been to engage actively in national and international benchmarking, audits and accreditation exercises. Doing so has two integrated and equally important aims: one is to document quality (QA) and the other is to push ourselves to learn and to find new insights into how to improve quality (QE). The quality activities used for these purposes are shown in figure 4.

- CEMS Benchmarking (1995)
- CRE Audit (1996), CRE Follow-Up (1998) (now EUA)
- EQUIS Accreditation (1999/2000)
- EQUIS re-accreditation (2004/2005)
- ESMU Benchmarking Programme (ongoing since 2001)
- Internal research evaluation with international peers (ongoing since 1994)
- AMBA Accreditation of 6 MBA programs (2007)
- National Accreditation of study programs by ACE Denmark (ongoing since 2007)
- OECD project on institutional quality initiatives in teaching (2008-2010)
- AACSB self-evaluation report for Initial Accreditation submitted (2009)

Figure 4: CBS' QA-activities striving to document quality as exceptional.

Engaging in benchmarking, audits, and accreditation exercises is not a centralised activity, but one that involves people at all levels of the organisation. In most cases, the main responsibility for such activities rests with key members of staff who have the relevant qualifications and who can work on the project on behalf of the executive leadership and management group. Mostly, the dean of education and the relevant study programme director will constitute a task force together with consultants from the internal centre for quality enhancement, CBS Learning Lab. We think of QA-activities as possibilities to learn and spread good practice, which means that we try to locate pockets of excellence within the organisation and to stimulate change at those points. As can be seen from figure 5 below, CBS has participated extensively in ESMU benchmarking exercises,

which allow for comparison with others in order to identify comparative strengths and weaknesses and to learn how to improve one's own processes.

ESMU benchmarking subject areas	CBS result	Best result
Strategic Management, Policy and Strategy (2001)	5	5
Management of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (2001)	4	4+
Marketing the University (2001)	3	3
Management Information Systems (2002)	3.8	4
Internal Quality Assurance (2002)	5	5
Student Services (2002)	4	4.5
E-Learning (2003)	2	5
External Funding (2003)	4	5
Institutional Research (2003)	3	4
Research Management (2004)	5	5
The University Creating a Regional Knowledge Base (2004)	4	4
Change Management (2004)	4	4
Internationalisation (2005)	4	4
Strategic Partnership (2005)	4	4
Governance and Structures (2005)	4	4
Designing new masters and doctorates (2005)	4	4
Marketing higher education institutions (2006)	4	4
Innovative teaching and learning (2006)	5	5

Figure 5: CBS' participation in ESMU benchmarks.

Source: ESMU Assessors' Reports 2001-2006.

The areas where CBS performed relatively below standard have led to the initiation of substantive QE-initiatives in the organisation. As an example, the low score in the benchmarking programme on E-Learning in 2003 led to the formulation of an overall learning strategy for CBS in 2005. This process was anchored at CBS Learning Lab, and the CBS Learning Strategy was developed in cooperation with all study boards, heads of departments and representatives from the student organisations. The general learning strategy was later used as the starting point for formulating an e-Learning strategy. Institutional research in 2003 led to initiatives to establish a more coherent management information system, which could be used also in relation to internal assessments and external reviews and accreditations. Today we have a dedicated Business Intelligence unit supporting both management, review groups, and staff involved in QE-activities in relation to study programmes. One can say that externally initiated QA-activities are a little like passing examinations, and in many ways it is highly motivating for staff to try to improve their practice in order to get good grades and to document why CBS is exceptional.

Perception 2: Quality as Perfection

The notion of quality as perfection refers to strategic development as a learning university. We work to empower staff to manage their jobs in reflective ways, and we work to encourage the continuous improvement of effectiveness. CBS Learning Lab is responsible for staff development in relation to teaching and learning. Our strategy is to develop the theoretical knowledge and reflective competencies of our teaching staff through teacher-training activities. CBS

Learning Lab offers open courses to teachers in a variety of teaching techniques, pedagogical issues, learning theory, learning styles, supervision, and examination. Mandatory two-days introduction courses to pedagogic theory are given to all new teachers (part-time as well as full-time), and all assistant professors have to take part in a mandatory 175 hours training programme entitled “Assistant Professor Programme in teaching and pedagogical competence”. It is not possible to get tenure at CBS as an associate professor without having passed this course (or the equivalent from another university). The mix of QA and QE-activities, which aim to develop CBS as a learning university, is shown in figure 6.

- Staff recruitment
- Staff development (competence development strategies and practices, administrative networks for knowledge sharing)
- Benchmarking (internal and external)
- Quality culture (focus on teaching, learning and research)
- Curriculum development

Figure 6: QA and QE-activities aimed at development as a learning university.

Perception 3: Quality as Fitness for Purpose

The notion of quality as fitness for purpose emphasises the importance of relating to the stakeholders in the business community, to the employers of CBS graduates and to national and international corporate partners. The quality initiatives we use to develop fitness for purpose and to establish partnerships with the business community are shown in figure 7.

- Dialogue with the Business Community
- Dialogue with graduates (alumni)
- Advisory Boards
- Employer Panels
- Corporate partners
- External examiners

Figure 7: QE-activities aiming at developing fitness for purpose.

Study programmes and academic departments are in continuous dialogue with the business community through established advisory boards. Following the change of the university law in Denmark it has become mandatory for universities to establish Employer Panels, which can ensure close links to society and help enhance the employability of students. At CBS such Employer Panels have been established at departmental level, to enable representatives from the business community to make input to the ways in which departments engage in and develop curricula. As part of its strategy, CBS has established centres for applied research, where networking with the business community takes place. Postgraduates joining the CBS alumni associations give important feedback about the quality of their education, and we have recently formulated an overall alumni policy. Our development of a corporate partnership programme has

added further momentum and intensity to the engagement with the corporate world.

In relation to curriculum, it was decided more than 15 years ago that all study programmes and modules should involve an element of practice, which has made it natural for teachers and curriculum developers to include members of the surrounding business communities in their curriculum as “live cases”, keynote speakers, project hosts or hosts for students’ internships. Such cooperative relations give instant feedback of the fitness for purpose of study programmes.

In 2004, we founded the CBS Career Office, for career-counselling and job placement of graduates. The activities and experiences with placement feed back into the curriculum design activities in the study boards and provide important information about the fitness for purpose of programmes. Such direct contact with graduates and the surrounding employers gives valuable information about what works and what does not work. Related to this are two web-based services, “Project Exchange” where companies can present themselves as project hosts and where students can search for companies to work with during their problem-based project-work, and “CBS Job Forum” which enables firms to advertise for internships and student positions. This direct relationship between students and employers gives immediate indication of the fitness for purpose of our students and graduates. Finally, we also make extensive use of external examiners, who are obliged to hand in an assessment sheet following each examination. Such assessments help align the focus and quality of the curriculum.

Perception 4: Quality as Value for Money

As a public university, it is important for CBS to demonstrate its accountability and responsibility to one or more external constituencies. These may be: governments providing funds to CBS, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Parliament, taxpayers, students following degree programmes and courses offered by CBS, graduates using their knowledge and skills from CBS in a job situation, and employers offering jobs to CBS graduates. All these examples refer to quality as ‘value for money’. At CBS, greater responsiveness to external demands for accountability, transparency, credibility etc. is not seen as the antithesis of self-regulation, but rather as an element of public responsibility, safeguarding autonomy.

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• External accreditation by ACE Denmark (ongoing since 2007)• Performance indicators (2005-2006) (Ministry)• Performance agreement (2000-2003) (Ministry)• Internal evaluations – feedback to students on webpage (ongoing)• Multiple focus group interviews with employers and alumni regarding drop-out rates, curriculum development, competencies of graduates (ongoing)• Bi-annual qualitative study of the “learning environment” at CBS (since 2004) |
|--|

Figure 8. QA and QE-initiatives aiming at developing value for money.

We work to establish a proper balance between internal enhancement and external accountability. Central performance indicators have been formulated for such areas as student exchange, research publication, PhD's, etc. Our Performance Agreement with the Ministry is one way in which we can raise the bar to set new aims for achievement and at the same time document our value for money. It is also required by law that we document our value for money through bi-annual qualitative studies of the learning environment at CBS. This exercise involves students and staff and is used to document quality and – more importantly – to identify areas for improvement. Each of the three learning environment studies made has led to the formulation of concrete projects of quality enhancement.

Perception 5: Quality as Transformation

As a learning university, the most important aim of the teaching and learning at CBS is to enhance the educational experience of students and to empower them. Here we come to the notion of quality as transformation. CBS needs to ensure that students develop knowledge, skills and abilities, but also that they are empowered as critical lifelong learners. Our graduates must possess “transformative skills.” According to Harvey & Knight (1996), a company, when hiring a graduate, will look at his or her overall competence profile. Companies are not interested in graduates who possess only academic competences, but prefer those who also have transferable skills that enable them to enhance the company’s potential for transformation. Harvey & Knight (1996) present an “enhancement continuum” that stretches from “adding to the organisation” to “transforming the organisation.” The value of a graduate to the company increases when he or she is located further to the right in the model. This indicates a situation in which the graduate is not only capable of bringing to the company the knowledge and ideas acquired through formal education, but in which he or she can also help carry the company forward by using critical and methodological skills. An important part of “transformational potential” is possession of transferable skills that allow the graduate to navigate different areas of constantly changing knowledge. The benefits to employers, apart from ‘intelligence,’ include such factors as flexibility, ambition, logical thinking, analysis, creativity, innovation, the ability to learn quickly and independently, well-developed communication skills and specialist knowledge. Such benefits are indicative of four underlying reasons for the employment of graduates: 1) the knowledge and ideas that they bring to an organisation; 2) their willingness to learn and their speed of learning; 3) their flexibility, adaptability and ability to deal with change; and 4) their logical, analytic, critical, problem-solving and synthetic skills and the impact they have on innovation. The initiatives taken in regard to quality as transformation are shown in figure 9.

- Continuous quality improvement
- Curriculum development with focus on learning rather than teaching
- Evaluation of transformative learning
- Embedding transferable skills into the academic curriculum
- Benchmarking (internal and external) – transfer of ‘good practice’
- Development of research based consultancy at CBS Learning Lab
- Use of external experts

Figure 9: QA and QE-initiatives to encourage transformation and empower students.

Many of the QA and QE-initiatives surrounding students’ transformation are closely linked to the micro-pedagogical and instructional issues surrounding teaching, learning and assessment. The establishment of CBS Learning Lab in 1994 introduced into the business school a unit solely devoted to quality enhancement in relation to teaching, learning and assessment. The primary aim of CBS Learning Lab is to work towards continuous enhancement of quality in the study programmes and teaching at CBS. To do so, its staff first and foremost engage in the competence development of teachers, course coordinators, members of study boards, and administrative staff. They give advice about pedagogical and technological development in all study programmes at CBS. CBS Learning Lab also offers professional project management of larger development projects, such as the development of new curricula or the development of curricula based on e-learning concepts or virtual space learning. This is done by engaging in close dialogue with study boards, curriculum directors, course coordinators and student organisations, in order to be able to service the needs of the study programmes in the best possible way. CBS Learning Lab staff are also engaged in research, particularly in order to develop new knowledge about the relationship between competence development, learning processes, and the role of new technology in higher education. As such, learning, teaching and assessment are not only present as mission statements at CBS. CBS Learning Lab works explicitly and professionally with the quality enhancement of study programmes, with teacher training, with consultancy, with evaluation and accreditation, and with research. In this way, it seeks to develop curricula that focus on learning rather than on teaching and thus works explicitly with students’ transformation.

7. Is there a Quality Culture at CBS?

From this account of CBS’ Quality Circle and its various interrelated activities, it should be possible to gain an idea of the ongoing quality work. Many parallel QA and QE-activities take place simultaneously. A criticism might be that the existence of such parallel activities does not automatically make for a quality culture. So how can we argue that a quality culture exists in CBS? What is special about the ways in which quality work takes place at CBS?

To answer these questions it is necessary to return to our perceptions of QE, QA and the organisation as mindset. At CBS we work to create norms and values that support QE-initiatives and make QA-activities an integrated part of

ongoing practice. Of course, we engage in the accreditation of study programmes because we have to, but we seek to carry out such activities in such a manner that they become a way of learning about our own practice. For us, quality work has to:

- be embedded in the mission and strategic focus areas of CBS;
- involve the university as a whole;
- have strong support from management;
- be located at and supported by departments, centres, and staff units;
- be a continuous systematic activity;
- have an international orientation;
- be stakeholder-related.

In creating a quality culture, we work from a bottom-up perspective, rather than top-down. This means that decision-making is decentralised; there is a strong focus on practice, rather than on systems. Change is often incremental and builds on existing good practice. Figure 10 shows how quality work may often take place in a decentralised organisation such as CBS. Once located, pockets of good practice can be nurtured and promoted, and through a unit like CBS Learning Lab such activities can be spread throughout the university, as practitioners of good practice participate in quality enhancement processes facilitated by CBS Learning Lab. Another way of promoting quality is by initiating pilot projects in parts of the organisation and by using the experience gained from them to roll out good practice. Much of the quality work facilitated by CBS Learning Lab derives from pilot projects.

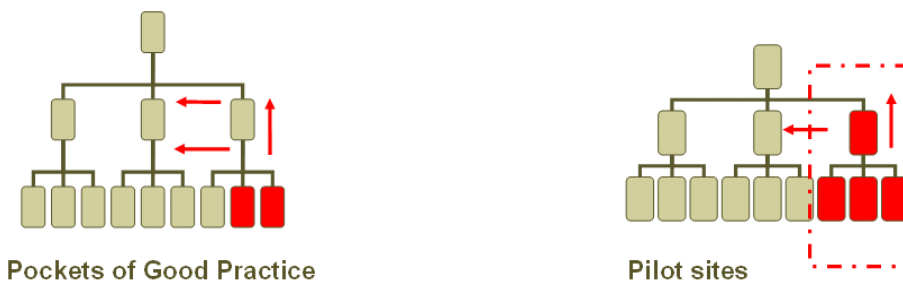


Figure 10: Typical ways of initiating quality work at CBS.

Although locating pockets of good practice and establishing pilot sites may take a long time and not cover the entire university in one go, there are immediate and long-term advantages to such bottom-up processes. It becomes possible to take strategic advantage of new opportunities as they appear in the organisation. Change is achieved by encouraging front-runners to further develop and share their best practice. Such front-runners become role models in the organisation and change is more clearly legitimised when based on positive experience. When larger projects have to be rolled out throughout the entire university, as is the case of our current QA-project on national programme accreditation initiated in 2007, in which all study programmes at CBS have to be accredited by the

national accreditation agency ACE-Denmark, it is done by bringing all key-stakeholders together in workshops and have them discuss and agree on which pilot sites to establish and how the project will be managed. For the past three years, annual institutional Quality Seminars have been arranged by CBS Learning Lab, in which all study programme directors, heads of study administrations, and student members of study boards and student organisations meet to discuss quality work. The first and second Quality Seminars concerned the national programme accreditation, while the third – in 2009 – was arranged to give further input to Internal Quality Policy at CBS.

From our participation in such activities, and from our experiences as consultants and researchers at CBS Learning Lab, the norms and values underlying the everyday practices of teaching and learning point the way to a quality culture. Furthermore, it is possible to find good involvement of stakeholders in both QA- and QE-activities at all levels of the organisation. There is also a relatively high level of dialogue between staff, and between staff and students, with students being represented 50/50 on all study boards. We are open to improvement and seek to engage in QA-activities, which can inform us further about possible shortcomings in our Quality Work. This remains our task and our challenge in the future nurturing of the Quality Culture at CBS.

8. Recommendations

Based on our experience at CBS, we wish to end this article by making ten central recommendations for others working to establish a Quality Culture at their university.

In the light of our perception of organisation as mindset, the first recommendation will be: Do not expect immediate results, as you are creating a culture where norms and values have to be institutionalised. You are not building a system or a machine.

Second recommendation: Take an organic, bottom-up approach where the focus is on key stakeholders, and for your change projects choose key persons who have legitimate decision-making power in the organisation. Do not staff your change projects on the basis of hierarchy, but on the basis of competencies, drive and legitimacy.

Third recommendation: Bring together key stakeholders and key personnel to coordinate your QE and QA-activities. Do not rely on systems, structures and manuals driven by top management or the central administration.

Fourth recommendation: Develop a tight and integrated information system throughout the organisation, which can assist the working groups in their quality work. QA-activities in particular require a lot of documentation, and having a well established information system both helps the QA-activities and the feedback of information into everyday QE-activities.

Fifth recommendation: See strategy formulation and implementation as a constant activity running through the entire organisation. Strategy is never fixed and it is important that quality work is not 'stifled' by strategy, but instead that it constantly develops strategy.

Sixth recommendation: Ensure that your quality work reflects the institutional context and profile of your university. Work to make it clear and well embedded within the overall strategy of the university. This can be done through a culture of engagement.

Seventh recommendation: Involve students at all levels. It is important to have a high level of student involvement. Establish forums for student involvement and feedback and give “real” decision-making power to students.

Eighth recommendation: Establish relations between the university and its external stakeholders, in order to obtain valuable input to curriculum development and valuable feedback on the employability of your graduates.

Ninth recommendation: Formulate support and follow-up mechanisms to your quality initiatives, in order to avoid situations in which lone innovators innovate, while the system itself remains bureaucratic. Encouragement, support and feedback will help develop a quality culture, and by bringing key personnel together on quality projects throughout all levels of the organisation (and across departments) you will help build a support network of peers.

Tenth recommendation: Work actively to integrate QA- and QE-activities, so that they together become a matter of enhancement. In that way you will avoid QA-activities being about compliance to external pressures, and you help create a culture in which it is a natural thing to let development and control go hand in hand.

Conclusion

At CBS we base the quality work described above on the Harvey and Green (1993) stakeholder-related concept of quality. However, within the organisation the concept is experienced not as a centralised or bureaucratic quality management system, but as a system giving room for quality assurance and quality enhancement linked more to persons than systems. Thus we work to cultivate a concern for quality through the creation of a quality culture. This implies nurturing the decentralisation of authority and decision-making power, encouraging initiatives and innovation, and spreading good practice. It also implies intensive teacher training, free consultancy support at all levels, and close links to students. Our student/staff ratio on study boards is 50/50. Largely, quality enhancement is a question of information and motivation of staff and students, and thus of strengthening the mutual confidence between the key stakeholders involved in our quality projects and everyday practices. Our quality work is a process of continuous quality improvement, aimed at satisfying the various stakeholders that these initiatives lead to change and improvement. This article has provided an insight into our perception of QE/QA and the university as mindset, which guides our overall perception of quality (CBS' Quality Circle). We have also given an empirical account of a number of projects and activities that constitute our quality work. To conclude this article with the main message summing up our approach, it is that quality enhancement is a long-term investment in people, values and norms, focusing on the creation of a quality culture rather than on a bureaucratic quality management system.

References:

- Argyris, C. & Schön, D (1978). *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective*, Reading, Mass: Addison Wesley.
- EUA (2006), *Quality Culture in European Universities: A Bottom-Up Approach. Report on the Three Rounds of the Quality Culture Project 2002–2006*, EUA.
- Harvey, L. & Green, D (1993). *Defining Quality. Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 9-34.
- Harvey L. & Knight, P T (1996). *Transforming Higher Education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Mintzberg, H. (1983). *Structure in fives: Designing effective organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Morgan, G. (1986). *Images of Organization*. Sage Publications.
- Newton, J. (2007). *What is Quality?* In *Embedding Quality Culture in Higher Education. A Selection of Papers from the 1st European Forum for Quality Assurance*, EUA.
- Omar & Liuhanen (2005). *A Comparative Analysis of Systematic Quality Work in Nordic Higher Education Institutions*. Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education
- Perrow, C (1972). *Complex Organizations. A Critical Essay*. McGraw Hill.

¹ Claus Nygaard is Professor in Management Education and Director of Research at CBS Learning Lab, Copenhagen Business School. He is co-founder and Director of the International Academic Association for the Enhancement of Learning in Higher Education [LIHE, www.lihe.wordpress.com]. He is co-founder and co-Director of cph:learning, specialising in the enhancement of student centred learning processes at university level.

Bente Kristensen is former Pro-Vice Chancellor at Copenhagen Business School, Associate Professor and Quality Expert at CBS Learning Lab, Copenhagen Business School. She is also a member of the international panel of external assessors at EUA, European University Association.