

Selfevaluation and Quality Awards in the Netherlands

This paper reveals the recent developments concerning the adaptation of the model of the Dutch Quality Award (DQA, the dutch version of the European Quality Award) for institutes of higher education. The paper draws conclusions concerning the fitness for use of the model in the selfevaluation in this environment. The enthusiastic results up till now strongly suggests the use in social work insititutes too.

At first the system of selfevaluation and "visitation" of the Higher Education (Universities and Higher Vocational Education) is explained (Paragraph 1). Then the recent developments are discribed. Divided in three sections: the universities choose more of the same, Higher Vocational Education tends to ISO and DQA, leading in a large amount of institutes of Higher Vocational Education to the choice of the Dutch Quality Award as instrument for selfevaluation. Then two surveys are described in which the fitness for use of the DQA-model in higher education is tested (Paragraph 3). In the last paragraph the possibilities for social work institutes are presented. (Paragraph 4).

1. Selfevaluation and visitation

In the eighties the Dutch Government aimed at increasing the autonomy of the institutes of social work, health care and education. The function of their "Inspectorate" was changed and greater responsibility in quality control was given to the institutes. The Ministry of Education and Science published the document *Higher Education: Autonomy and Quality* in 1985. The Universities as well as the institutes for Higher Vocational Education (in Germany: die Fachhochschulen) took the challenge and took the responsibility for quality assurance in their own hands. A system of selfassessment (selfevaluation) and peer review (visitation) was developped, that is owned by the (two unions of) institutes itself. The goal of the system is quality improvement.

T. Vroeijenstijn¹ summs up the main characteristics of the system:

¹ T. Vroeijenstijn *Preparing the Second Cycle: External Quality Assessment in Dutch Universities in: Changing Contexts of Quality Assessment Recent trends in West European Higher Eduaction* Westerheijden D.F., Brennan J and Maassen P.A.M. (eds) Lemma Utrecht 1994

There is no link between outcomes of assessment and funding.

The system is not performance-indicator oriented. The faculties are involved in the nomination of the members of the visiting committees, consisting of peers or in the case of Higher Vocational Education representatives of the professions, where the school trains for. The assessment operates nationwide: all universities and institutes for Higher Vocational Education with a similar programme in the relevant area of knowledge or profession are visited by the same visiting committee. The process is supposed to be cyclical: for education the period is six years.

The universities just finished the first cycle and started the second. The second round for the Institutes for Higher Vocational Education follows in 1997.

Let's give an example. All programmes of the Higher Vocational Education to become a social worker have been evaluated. To do so they all had to write a selfevaluation report of about 40 pages in which the organization and education are described and evaluated. Strength and weaknesses are answered for. The strategy for the next four years is stated. The report with a pile of appendices is sent to the HBO-Raad (the union of schools for Higher Vocational Education). Together with representatives of the schools for social work they select a visiting committee, consisting of social workers in various functions and institute and an educational technologist. The committee takes a two day visit and communicates among others with the Board of Directors, the manager of the school, the students, graduates, employees and teaching staff. They mainly test the reliability of the selfevaluation report. At the end of the visit they make some first remarks of the state of the art. After a few month a written report is published in which the results of all the visitations are summarised. A conclusion is drawn concerning the state of the art of the education of social work in general and the school in Eindhoven e.g. in particular. (We can be content, we belong to the top of the schools in our country.)

2. Recent developments

2.1. More of the same

Since the first cycle of selfevaluation and visitation of the institutes for higher education is (or almost) finished, some observations can be made about their effectiveness.

Vroeijenstijn sums up the criticisms of faculties, students visiting committees and Government. Roughly it can be stated that the system functioned well and served the quality

improvement. The visitations appear to give an positive injection. They have a leverage, since the institutes get more and more quality-minded. Based upon the visitatons quality improvement plans are layed and qualitysystems are implemented. However remarks are made among others concerning:

- * the lack of explicit criteria
- * the time (and money) involved
- * the unclearness of the recommendations
- * the lack of a student in the visiting committee
- * the need for better quantitative data
- * the presence of an educational specialist in the committee
- * more training of the visiting committee
- * better accessibility of the reports for the public.

In the line of this criticism measures are taken to improve the selfevaluation at the universities.

2.2. ISO

The institutes of Higher Vocational Education however tend to choose another path and borrow theory and experience from profit organizations. Experiments are done with ISO. ISO stands for International Standardization Organization, a worldwide organization, which drafts international standards. These standards have a code, nine thousand and one, nine thousand and two, nine thousand and four, for various kinds of companies. To the present day ISO nine thousand and one is the most extensive standard. The purpose of ISO standards is to enable the company "to manufacture products continuously that meet specifications intrinsicly and to make this evident to the customer in advance, before the delivery of the product". The organization works in accordance with procedures and instructions drawn up and laid down in a quality manual. When the quality manual is ready, the company can have itself certified by a certification agency, tested by the National Council for Certification. In quality jargon called an audit. Recently a specific standard for an educational organization (the British Standard 5750) has been developed.

At the moment several institutes in Higher Vocational Education are looking if ISO-standards can be applied to higher education. The first course (a higher vocational course on aviation) has been ISO-certified. In the Hogeschool Eindhoven a course (Personell Manager) and a service (Education Facilities, providing facilities on video, audio, library etc) experimented with ISO. The course had some difficulties in the use of ISO. Besides the positive effects like clearness in the processes and responsibilities, the bureaucracy of the system was experienced to be demotivating. In the more routine environment of the service involved in the experiment the use of ISO appeared more succesfull. Last december the Education Facilities Service got its ISO-certificate.

In the Netherlands there is some experience with the use of ISO-standards for social work institutions. The "Vereniging van Ondernemingen in de Gepremieerde en gesubsidieerde sector", in short VOG has developed an ISO-like instrument. It is an association of enterprises in the State-aided or otherwise subsidized sector. The instrument contains about fifty standards concerning:

- * the organization
- * the employees
- * the methods
- * the supplies.

An example on organization, especially on people management: "The organization has a clear, actual and accesible human resource management. "

An other on methods: "The organization has a method, including intake, treatment and conclusion, written down in its content, procedures and organization."

The responsability for quality control and quality improvement is considered to be shared by the management and the professionals, where the topmanagement and government body is responsible for the implementation of quality-enhancing structures, procedures and conditions.

2.3. Dutch Quality Award

Others seek the improvement of selfevaluation in the European Quality Award (EQA) (or the dutch equivalent, Nederlandse Kwaliteitsprijs, DQA). In the European Quality Awardmodel is indicated that an organization has to examine itself for nine aspects: five "enablers" namely: leadership, people management, policy and strategy, resources and processes; and four points related towards results, namely people satisfaction, customer satisfaction, impact on society and business results (see figure 1). At the same time weight has been given to all these parts, indicating their importance in relation to each other. This model is also used for the quality award by "het Instituut Nederlandse Kwaliteit" (Dutch Quality Institute) to encourage the "Total Quality" in Dutch industry. The dutch version of EFQM adds five phases on development an organization can decide on.

The phases recognised are: activity oriented, process oriented, systems oriented, chain oriented and oriented on total quality. In phase one an organization stresses highly the quality of its "product". Process control as a technique is hardly mentioned. Change is a management task about which there is little discussion with the operational level. Features of an organization in phase two are: the description of all primary and supporting processes, the determination of standards for important processes and

sufficient regulation of the main operations to pass certification according to the ISO 9000 standards. But EFQM goes beyond ISO. The systems-oriented organization in phase three has described primary and supportive processes in mutual cohesion such as required by systems theory. The organization can be called entirely externally (customer-)oriented. In phase four the organization is called chain-oriented because of its awareness of its place in the chain between suppliers and customers. Attention is focused on preventing problems in the processes. Business partners are considered part of the organization, the system. Finally in phase five there is a common understanding of where the organization stands in its environment. Signals from the environment lead to modifications. Entrepreneurship can be found in all echelons.

In practice the organization performs a selfevaluation in which at all nine aspects (enablers and results) is decided on the phase of development. Thereafter an audit will take place in which independant auditors judge the organization.

In an article in "Onderzoek van Onderwijs"² I compared ISO and EFQM for their usefulness in selfevaluation, using five criteria, derived from Ruijter³:

1. The selfevaluation should be internally consistent. That consistency is often non-existent in the reports and the prescriptions of the unions are no guarantee.
2. The selfevaluation should clarify what effect is the maximum that can be attained.
3. The selfevaluation should be critical and analytical.
4. The visiting committee should conclude unanimously and give consistent advice. That asks for training members of the visiting committees in the auditing-process.
5. The selfevaluation should make a choice: description of the qualitycaresystem, mission or quality. The phase of development in which an organization is, should influence the content of the selfevaluation.

ISO could meet the first four criteria, but the model used for the Dutch Quality Award with its five stages meets criterium 5 too, is even more complete than

ISO. That's why a group of institutes of Higher Vocational Education in the Netherlands, one of which is the "Hogeschool Eindhoven", choose to adapt the model for selfevaluation of the Dutch Quality Award to higher education.

² Only available in dutch. E.A. van Kemenade Na de visitatie: certificatie of kwaliteitsprijs ? In *Onderzoek van Onderwijs* febr. 1995

³ Only available in dutch. Ruijter C.T.A. Effecten van zelfevaluatie en visitatie in *Onderzoek van Onderwijs* 27.4 (1992).

3. Experiments in higher education

The "Fontys Hogeschool" has performed two surveys in 1998 to test the (dutch version) of the model for its use in self-evaluation.

The first survey, by a graduate of Eindhoven University of Technology, Graduate School of Industrial Engineering and Management Science, concerned the use of the model on faculty level. The Faculty of Health Care and Social Work consisting of twelve different courses was the subject of the survey. The topmanagement of the organization was asked to evaluate their own performances. Afterwards the managers of the twelve courses were asked to criticize their judgement. The selfevaluation report was adjusted and laid down.

The survey pointed out that the instrument of the Dutch Quality Award could be used in this environment and on this (faculty) level. However adaptation of the model to the specific situation of an educational institution was recommended. Furthermore could be concluded that the faculty needed to redefine and discuss again their concept of "customers" and "processes". Agreements should be made on the output to be measured and the indicators to measure it with. In a following project indicators on output are being developed.

The second survey by the quality manager of the Faculty of Health Care and Social Work, concerned the use of the model on the level of a course, a four year study to become socio-pedagogical welfareworker. The subject of the survey was only one of the nine aspects, the heart of the model, the processes. All the personnel of the unit was asked to score the categories of the processes and decide on the stage of development.

The first conclusion was that the effectiveness of the check ("stage management" in figure two), on the modules produced by (teams of) lecturers was highly questioned. Due to this survey the responsibility and the authority of the curriculumcommittee in this matter has been increased.

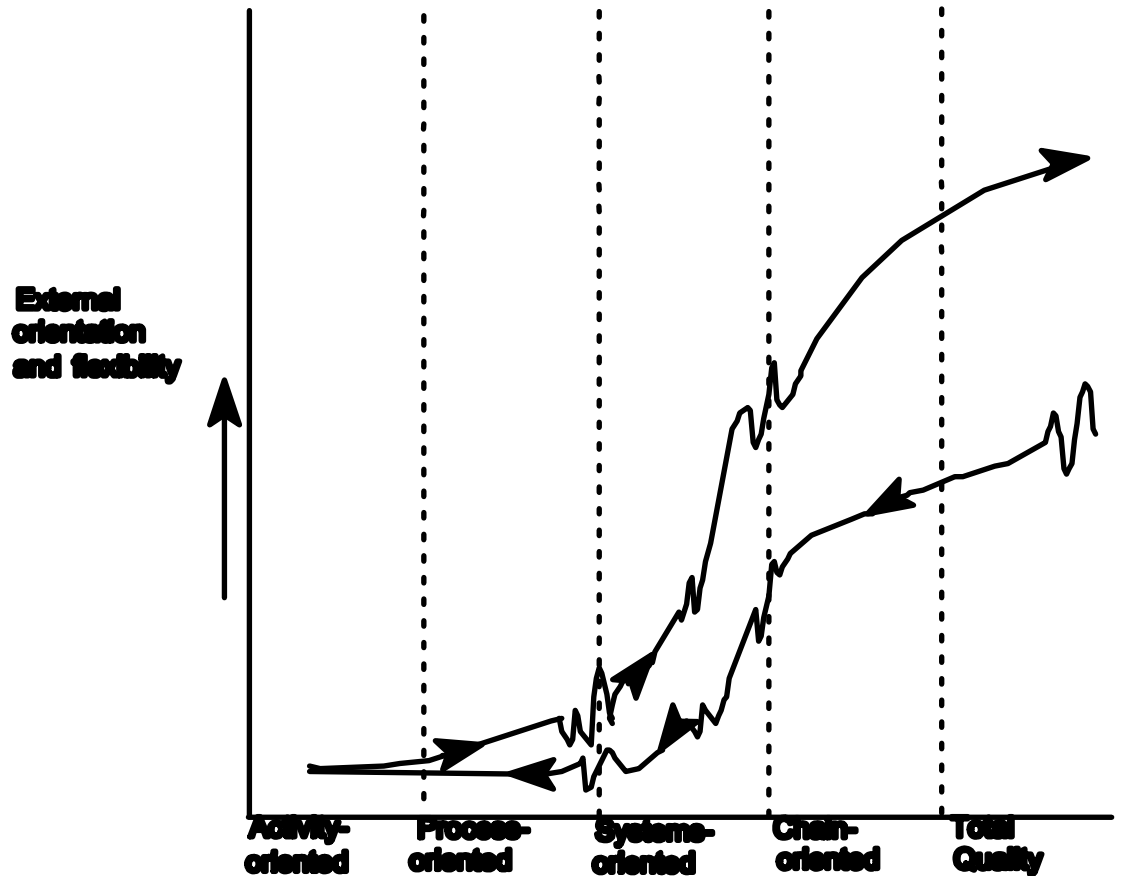
Second and most important was the conclusion that the processes of the course scored partly in phases four and five, but that they lacked back up from preceding phases. That conclusion agrees with the statements of Hardjono⁴ in his article "The Dutch Quality Award. An Elaboration of the European Quality Award". *"Non-profit and public organizations have to go this route (from one phase to the other, EvK) twice. Their right to exist lies*

⁴ Hardjono The Dutch Quality Award. An Elaboration of the European Quality Award" Berenschot BV November 1993.

in the fact that they have to perform societal duties. However, the non-profit and public sectors include a wide range of enterprises. Some are very product- and procedure-oriented in their societal duties and have problems with the aspect that the customers decide what quality is, unlike profit organizations in that phase. Sometimes they even have problems with the aspect "customer". Others recognize the aspect "customer", but have problems with "product". Hardly any of these organizations have paying customers. For these kind of organizations, a development from product orientation, through process orientation, systems orientation and chain orientation towards Total Quality or societal orientation might seem illogical. The societal role has always controlled everything and has kept other "orientations" at a distance. The organizations behind the Dutch Quality Award and Decoration are convinced that providing quality is crucial for these organizations too. The nine focus areas also apply to them."

And: " To put it simply, most of the non-profit and public organizations have to travel the road towards Total Quality twice and therefore have to deal with four revolutionary transitions. First they will have to go from merely societal orientation, through chain orientation (getting used to public-private partnership), systems orientation (contract management etc.), process orientation (cost awareness and increase of efficiency) towards product orientation (what product do we supply ?). Wiser through experience, they will again have to travel to be alert to the fact that each step is an extension of the step before." (See figure two).

**Diagram change towards flexibility,
ability to adapt and react**



The programme of socio-pedagogical welfare, fully aware of its societal duties (phase five) had e.g. insufficiently described the processes (phase two) it was in. And the existing descriptions of the processes from profit organizations didn't fit. In that sense we disagree with Hardjono's conclusion, that the nine focus areas apply to non-profit organizations except "business results": *"The only aspect that might need modification is "business results". Although non-profit and public organizations sometimes are seemingly insensitive to cost/benefit analyses, historically the moment of truth arrives and the aspect "financial results" also has to be applied to non-profit and public organizations, even though the standards to measure by might be different."*

We found out that the processes of an (educational) organization need modification too.

Based upon the results of an ISOproject, that just then was ended in another course at the Faculty of Health Care and Social Work of the Hogeschool Eindhoven a description was made of the processes in education. Ten categories were discerned, five concerning education development, five education performance:

Education development

1. external analysis/evaluation,
2. specifications,
3. curriculumdevelopment,
4. the development of a module,
5. the "stage management",

Education performance

6. planning,
7. studentactivities,
8. teacheractivities,
9. registration of the studyprogress
- 10.the internal analysis/evaluation

(See figure 3).

It would reach too far to elucidate these categories. A proper adaptation should be made for social work institutes.

Important conclusion is that the model as used in the program of the socio-pedagogical welfareworker helps to reveal the state of the art and to set goals for the future. After completion of the survey a project started to fill in the "gaps" in the outcomes of phases three and two.

The system was furthermore less time-consuming than the less structured selfevaluation, known from the visitation process.

4. Conclusion

The DQA-model is no panacea. It is a managementinstrument with a high level of abstraction. It can be used to evaluate the present and desired situation of the organization. But it will not exactly tell you how to make the progress from let's say phase three to four. It will not either tell you how to motivate the people in the organization to put effort into quality improvement.

will appear to give an positive injection. They will have a leverage, since the institutes get more and more quality-minded. Based upon the audits quality improvement plans will be layed and qualitysystems implemented.

An effective procedure for auditing has been developed by the Instituut Nederlandse Kwaliteit, that runs the Dutch Quality Award. A team of experts, choosen by the union of social work organizations, experts on organization and content of social work could study the selfevaluation, the papers and other material made available by the institution and could perform a sight visit, where a cross-section of the stakeholders is interviewed. That would help the organizations to account to society.

The DQA-model is internally consistent. It will clarify the maximum effect that can be attained in the organization. It will provide a critical and analytical evaluation of the programme or institute. It will provide an overview of the phase of development an organization is in and a goalsetting mechanism.

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9. REGISTRATION OF
THE STUDY PROGRESS

2. SPECIFICATIONS

