INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT- A META-ANALYSIS OF THEORIES AND APPROACHES

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Preface

There have been a lot of studies conducted on quality management in higher education in the recent decade. However, not much research has focused on the analysis of how theoretically grounded these studies are and what approaches are employed in them. When an opportunity was given to me to choose a topic for my master thesis and after having a discussion with my supervisor, Bjørn Stensaker, the above mentioned topic became the central point of my research study. Although writing this thesis had been a difficult and challenging task for me, it was also informative and inspiring. My motivations for this thesis were to prove myself capable of doing independent research, as well as to contribute to knowledge in the area of institutional quality management of higher education.

I would like to thank many people without whom this research would not have been possible. First of all, I express my cordial gratitude to my supervisor, Bjørn Stensaker. I want to acknowledge Bjørn’s guidance through the whole process of conducting this research study. His thorough, instructive and critical comments on all my products have been invaluable and of great help. I would also like to thank Bjørn for bringing more structure into my ideas and sharing some of his excellent ideas concerning this topic.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Quality and quality management as the highly debated topics in the literature

With the massification and diversification of higher education in many countries in the 1980s and 1990s, there came some concerns with the quality, standards and value for money. As one of the consequences, a so-called ‘quality industry’ both within and on the fringes of higher education systems was established, with the current and former academics as its main participants. Moreover, another consequence was that a growing interest in researching quality in higher education could be seen amongst academics.

Nowadays quality systems in most countries are an established and accepted part of higher education, but the amount of research and writing in this area is still high. There are a number of academic journals devoted only to quality issues, such as *Quality in Higher Education* or *Quality Assurance in Higher Education*, along with some others where articles on this topic are published regularly.

There is a variety of questions that drive research into the quality of higher education. These include:

- What are the most appropriate ways of evaluating academics’ performance?
- What forms of quality assurance might be considered as the most suitable and successful for higher education?
- What is the role of performance-based funding in higher education?
- How is quality viewed by different stakeholders of higher education?
- What quality management models being of great success and effectiveness in industry, could be implemented with respect to the quality management of higher education?

Thus, contemporary research into quality in higher education is devoted to different aspects of this field which are of great importance and interest for the society now.

However, despite the considerable volume of articles written on different aspects of quality in higher education, there has been no research done on the critical analysis of the theories, views and perspectives suggested by the researchers on quality in higher education in the great amount of writing in this field.

As a result, I would like to focus my study on analyzing a number of articles written on quality in higher education, whereas my particular concern will be mainly with the
institutional quality management issues. The reason for choosing the very topic of my research is that this type of meta-review on the written literature on quality management in higher education could be used to inform the debate and improve the research into this area through analyzing the theories and practical experiences suggested and described by many researchers on quality assurance and quality management in higher education.

1.2 The journals on quality in higher education

“Journals are, in a sense, the intellectual heart of any scientific field…” (Altbach 2006, Journals and Higher Education).

The increasing interest and research in quality in higher education has recently led to a growth in journals on quality in higher education. Although the publications covering the issue of higher education quality and its other aspects can be found in numerous journals on higher education, there are some journals which are especially dedicated to this particular area of higher education. Moreover, international publishers have discovered that there is a potential market for journals covering the higher education quality area, and, therefore, they have invested in supporting a number of them.

An example of such a journal is Quality in Higher Education, one of the oldest international journals in the area. Some other journals dealing with the issues of quality and quality assurance in higher education are the following: Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, Quality Assurance in Education. These journals focus on publishing papers and reports on all aspects of quality management within higher education. They also seek to contribute to developing effective strategies to deal with the complex and uncertain environment in which higher education operates. The contents of the journals try, therefore, to serve several purposes: to stimulate and encourage debate; to reflect best practice; to influence and determine policy. Furthermore, the editors of the journals pursue the idea of covering the perceptions and opinions of quality in education of a number of stakeholders in order to get a balanced view. The key journal audiences are represented by producers and consumers of higher education services; strategic managers of education; local and central government; employers and community groups.

What does the appearance of the journals specialising in quality and quality assessment say about the field of higher education? It is a clear indicator of the expansion of the interest in
higher education quality, access, management of higher education institutions, student
development and many other aspects of quality.
Higher education sector has expanded immensely worldwide. Higher education systems and
institutions have become professionalised, i.e. managed by professionals rather than scholars
who dedicate themselves to the provision of leadership. Furthermore, a number of full-time
administrators have been employed to manage expanding institutions in such areas as
financial management, student development, facilities planning and others. Many of these
professionals show an interest in the latest trends in higher education and look for the ideas to
improve the management and leadership of higher education institutions. Another focus of the
journals on quality in higher education is the theoretical work being done in the area.
There has also been an expansion of organisations dealing with the issues of quality in higher
education worldwide. For example, the journal *Quality in Higher Education* is published in
association with International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in HE (INQAAHE).
These groups constitute a market for research and analysis, as well as organisations of
administrators, whose members contribute articles on this field.
All in all, the appearance of the journals spesialising in higher education quality shows that
the area of higher education has increased in importance leading to the expansion of the
amount of analysis and research. It may also signify a maturing of the area and a positive
expansion in the nature and scope of work.

1.3 Background of the study

The principles of quality management appeared in the area of management practices relatively
not long time ago. Although the first literature in this area goes back to the period of ‘Human
Relations Development’ of management theory (1930-1960), a real debate on this topic in the
management literature of the western countries has been started only since 70s (e.g. Gryna
and Juran, 1970), after it was successfully applied in Japan.
The discussions of quality in higher education began almost a few decades later. However,
nowadays, being supported by a set of techniques, a theory of quality management has gained
its significance in organizational practice. The influential power of quality management can
only be compared with the theories of ‘scientific management’ stated by Taylor in the
beginning of the 20th century, the main idea of which was to pursue efficiency by division of
labour and mass production.
QM theories were considered by the industry and the universities as means of addressing their problems. For the Industry and Service Organisations quality techniques were a way of reducing the customer alienation with the help of massification of markets and emphasis on efficiency (Deming, 1982, ch.3). While the universities saw quality techniques as way out of elitism, consequent seclusion through making its product, education, exclusive. This led to understanding by the society its appropriateness and effectiveness of its operation. The social development at that time urged the need for dealing with and providing for the mass markets, but quality management techniques turned out to be badly prepared for that (Freed et al.,1997).

Eventually, due to these developments both the industry and the universities began to concentrate on similar outcomes, i.e. creating flexibility and improvement in order to cope with a large number of customers in a quite unpredictable environment (Seymour et al., 1996,ch.1).

In higher education this new approach has caused a great number of fundamental disagreements, leading to a distortion of meaningful practice (Birnbaum and Deshotels, 1999).

A great amount of writings has been done, suggesting different models for ensuring quality in its performance. However, there are still disagreements about their suitability. Moreover, all these models have in its essence the elements of TQM theory and are of industrial origin. The reason for these disagreements seems to lie in different approaches to quality in higher education and industry. Nevertheless, the main argument against applying QM theory to higher education, as being extensively reported in the literature, is mainly about the way it’s been implemented rather than its overall philosophy. De Vries wrote that ‘…quality management as it is applied to universities is a misrepresentation of the way in which quality education is achieved’ (Radford et al., 1997). Barnett (1994) saw ‘…the language of accountability’ with respect to quality as ‘…a code for a level of heightened surveillance…’, pointing out to the absence of collaborative culture.

As a consequence, the current situation in the higher education management area is a controversial one, i.e. the academics and the staff in the institutions show little motivation for quality management, whereas the state or the other funding bodies are becoming more interested in quality assessment.
A critical meta-review of the research literature on this topic could, therefore, help with better understanding of the existing views and theories about both present and future perspectives of the institutional quality management. It might even facilitate the further research in this area.

1.4 Major concepts

1.4.1 Quality and its assessment in higher education

To give a clear and universal definition of quality in higher education is a challenging task. According to Cheng and Tam (1997: 23), “education quality is a rather vague and controversial concept”. “There are as many definitions of quality in higher education as there are categories of stakeholders…times the number of purposes, or dimensions, these stakeholders distinguish” (Brennan et al., 1992: 13). Cheng and Tam (1997:23) argued that from a wider perspective, education quality can be seen as a set of elements that constitute the input, process and output of the education system, and provides services that satisfy both internal and external actors through meeting their explicit and implicit expectations. If higher education is regarded as a system, then any quality management programme should therefore concentrate on assessing inputs, process and outputs.

Cheng and Tam (1997) also differentiate between both internal and external stakeholders in the quality management process. The internal actors are current students and front line staff, whereas employers, government bodies, institutional management, prospective students are external ones. These stakeholders might define quality in different ways as well as prefer different quality assessment procedures. As Cheng and Tam (1997) further argue that expectations of these actors may be not only disparate but contradictory as well. The most challenging task here is to create a certain framework of performance evaluation that would make the equal expression of legitimate voices possible, though they may be contradictory or competitive in some ways (Cullen et al., 2003).

Harvey and Green (1993) suggest that stakeholders’ views on quality could be categorized according to five definitions: quality as exceptional (e.g. high standards), quality as perfection or consistency (e.g. zero defects), quality as fitness for purpose (fitting customer specifications), quality as value for money, and quality as transformation (an continuing process of empowerment and enhancement of students). While the authors suggest that
quality as transformation includes the other definitions to some extent, it can also be argued that different definitions of quality are likely to be prioritised by different stakeholders in accordance with their motivations and interest.

The external stakeholders have traditionally been associated with quality assurance activities. Quality assurance refers to “systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of quality maintenance and quality improvement” (Vroeijenstijn, 1995: xix). This demands from higher education institutions accountability for public funds received and the demonstration of the results they achieve with the available resources. In this case the mechanisms used for quality assurance are usually imposed by external bodies and include accreditation, external examiners and quality audits (McKay and Kember, 1999). The prioritized definitions of quality (from those suggested by Harvey and Green, 1993) are therefore quality as consistency, quality as fitness for purpose, and quality as value for money. The mechanisms of the external quality assurance play thereby an important role in quality assessment practices for a number of stakeholders.

Nevertheless, the mechanisms for quality assurance mentioned above can be considered as being summative by nature and giving only a general overview of quality.

On the contrary, internal stakeholders are more likely to be concerned with quality as transformation. The main focus here is not only on quality assurance, but also on quality enhancement in teaching, learning and research. Elton (1992) suggests that this approach concentrates on the quality “E’s: Empowerment, Enthusiasm, Expertise and Excellence.” The mechanisms for quality enhancement used by internal stakeholders are usually self-evaluations and student surveys. This approach tends to be more formative by nature and consequently it is likely to lead to continual improvement of quality. However, these mechanisms represent a comparatively small number of stakeholders.

It is argued by Colling and Harvey (1995: 30) that there is a need to adopt an approach that ensures accountability, enhances quality, is practical, efficient and effective, and offers a degree of autonomy. Moreover, according to these authors (Colling and Harvey 1995: 30) external scrutiny should be linked into a process of continual quality improvement in order to enhance quality. As a way of achieving this, external scrutiny must be reviewed and combined with internal quality enhancement processes.
Many researchers have tried to utilise various approaches to quality in order to develop appropriate quality assessment models for higher education. One of the most frequently used approaches is that of Total Quality Management, referred as:

“A management approach of an organization, centered on quality, based on the participation of all its members and aiming at long run success through customer satisfaction and benefits to all members of the organization and to society.”

(ISO8402 in Wiklund et al., 2003: 99)

The reason for TQM being so widely-used is that it has a capacity to integrate the quality perspectives of both external and internal stakeholders, and therefore lead to a comprehensive approach to quality management that will assure quality together with encouraging change and innovation. Nevertheless, the adoption of TQM has proved that it has some limitations when applied to higher education system. According to Roffe (1998), there are more numerous and complex quality indicators in higher education than in industry. Harvey (1995) argues that while the emphasis of quality in industry usually lies with the customer, in higher education there is no agreement about who the customer actually is.

In sum, it is difficult to give a definition of quality that will meet the expectations of all the experts and stakeholders. Neither there is a definitive model to evaluate quality within higher education. Nevertheless, common features within all the mentioned definitions as well as certain key elements of an analytical framework do exist in order to assess quality management practice in higher education.

For the purpose of future analysis done in this study these certain elements have been singled out:

- what is the main focus for assessment, i.e. inputs, processes or outputs; and how they are assessed
- how and which stakeholder’s expectations are met
- the relationship between quality assurance and quality enhancement mechanisms

In the next section the concept of quality management in general and with respect to higher education, in particular, will be discussed in more details.
1.4.2 Quality management

With more attention being paid to quality in higher education, it is now seen as something that can and should be managed and improved (Seymour, 1992; Dill, 1992). What is quality management? How is it interpreted in higher education literature? There are as many different definitions of quality management as the ones of quality, as they are two interrelated concepts.

First of all, the term ‘quality management’ encompasses policies, systems and processes designed for ensuring the maintenance and enhancement of quality within an institution (Csizmadia 2006: 24). Quality management can be also regarded as the techniques and instruments used to improve the quality of organisational operating mechanisms through making the activities of institutions more accountable and transparent and improving their performance.

Quality management with respect to higher education also refers to such notions as control, assurance and improvement. Brennan and Shah (2000: 5) define ‘quality management’ as “a more general term to describe the total process of judgement, decision and action” and then add that this term also “…covers all structures and processes, internal as well as external, involved in assuring quality in higher education”.

Another aspect of quality management that has to be mentioned is the debate about the necessity of implementation of quality management principles in higher education, as well as the choice of the quality management models that will be appropriate for this field. Most authors regard the idea of quality management as one of the necessary conditions for a better and further development of higher education during the current changes in modern society.

According to Trow (1994), there is a need for quality management principles to make higher education activities more efficient and to improve quality (referred in Csizmadia, 2006: 25). Van Vught (1996) also points out that higher education needs appropriate quality management, its instruments to contribute to higher education institutions’ better performance.

Moreover, it has to be mentioned that the issue of quality management has been on the agenda of higher education institutions for several decades. The main forces being considered as the rationale for implementing quality management principles in higher education are the following:
o a growing climate of increasing accountability, efficiency and effectiveness
o massification of the field
o diversification of the student population
o diminishing resources in the field
o greater expectations of students as customers who share the cost of higher education
o more flexible provision of education
o an increase in collaboration between institutions for the purpose of a better educational provision

These forces have led towards the situation when higher education institutions have obtained more autonomy and freedom in managing their educational processes as well as the financial resources. However, in return for being more autonomous in their decision-making, institutions are required to have quality assurance procedures in place that would guarantee continuous quality maintenance and enhancement.

As a result, many institutions have adopted different quality management practices in order to meet their stakeholders’ requirements and expectations.

In spite of the progress that has been made through the research and debate, there is still no mutual agreement on what might be considered as the best quality management practices within higher education.

Thus, the meta-review of opinions and practices described in the current literature on quality assessment in higher education might be considered as one of the contributions to institutional quality management.

1.5 Research problem

Taking into consideration the described above issues in quality management of higher education institutions, the overall research problem can be formulated as the following:

What characterizes research-based approaches to and analysis of institutional quality management?

In other words, how is the institutional quality management understood and how could it be improved in the best way according to the numerous writings done on this topic?

This research problem will be investigated on the basis of the following research questions:
1. Who/ what do the researchers in quality management use as a framework of reference?
2. How theoretically grounded are their analysis of quality management in higher education?
3. What criteria do they stress while analyzing the approaches?
4. What is the researchers’ role during the analysis?

This implies that the study looks into different theories, views and perspectives on both quality management mechanisms implemented within higher education institutions, as well as the factors and the organizational actors which play an important role in the process.

In order to operationalize the stated research problem and the research questions, the qualitative content analysis of documents has been chosen as being most suitable for achieving the objectives of the study. Document analysis has such characteristics as: the use of existing material; being relatively easily accessible; no direct contact with the research object; and looking at the material used from a different perspective than when it was produced (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 1999). Two categories of the material have been used for carrying out meta-review: research publications and organizational documents published in Quality in Higher Education Journal.

1.6 Limitations of the study

This research was framed by certain contextual boundaries, as well as by the limitations of the selected research methods. First of all, given the multiplicity of quality management practices both at a level of higher education institution and at a national level, it was not possible to look into the application of all of them within the framework of this study. Thus, I chose to focus my research on exploring the processes of quality management and assessment only at an institutional level. Besides, I was very interested in exploring how higher education institutions manage their quality matters in a rapidly changing environment. In the recent research literature, there has been a lot of debate concerning purposes and methods of quality management and assessment, and conditions under which institutions can succeed or even survive. I, therefore, considered that the investigation of the literature and finding out how the researchers on higher education see institutional management of quality, and what they think of the developments taking place in this area, could assist at further understanding of this phenomenon and, as a result, improving or enhancing educational quality.
Another possible limitation of this study lies in the fact that it was based on secondary analysis of qualitative data. As Hammersley (1997, quoted in Bryman, 2004: 415) suggests that ‘reuse of qualitative data may be hindered by the secondary analyst’s lack of an insider’s understanding of the social context within which the data were produced’. Thus, it is possible that the interpretation of data was influenced by this difficulty.

Bearing this in mind, I attempted to analyse the data from the general perspective in order to create a common vision of what is taking place in the field of higher education with respect to internal quality management and assessment.
Chapter 2. An Analytical Framework for Analysing Quality Management

2.1 Models of quality management

2.1.1 Introduction

Since there is an increase of public interest in institutional quality management and how it can contribute to quality improvement within higher education institutions, it is important to look into it more thoroughly and critically. This study, with its main focus on the use and characteristics of research-based approaches to institutional quality management, is meant to do it.

This chapter compares various generic quality management models which have been developed for higher education institutions and described in the recent literature. The models are used as a point of departure - a theoretical base - for developing a framework for the analysis of the quality management approaches reported upon.

As it has already been mentioned in Chapter 1, quality in higher education has been a highly-debated topic for almost two decades now. One of the reasons for introducing quality terminology to higher education was the necessity for higher education to remain competitive in a fast changing environment.

“The challenges that face higher education today and in the near future require a new set of philosophies and methods. Our work environment is in a continual state of flux. Many of the operating assumptions of the past simply don’t apply now… Developing a lot of happy satisfied customers—whether they are students, parents of students, alumni, professors, or industry employers—should be a primary goal of causing quality in higher education…” Quality is defined by the user in terms of the ‘capacity to satisfy wants’ “(Seymour, 1992: 24, 42, 43). Therefore, at the beginning of the nineties the idea of applying the popular industrial quality models, aiming at customers’ satisfaction, to the higher education area became widespread. TQM can be considered as the first quality management model in higher education that caused a lot of discussions concerning its tools as well as its educational and social implications.

Although there has been some data showing certain positive changes in several areas of institutional activities, such as improved enrollment, retention and internal institutional environment (Freed and Klugman, 1997), a greater number of authors argue that TQM failed with respect to higher education. For example, after having done a survey of 469 higher
education institutions in the USA, Birnbaum and Deshotels (1999) concluded that the adoption of TQM in higher education is both a ‘myth and illusion’. However, the problem lies not within the TQM philosophy but the way it was implemented. As Birnbaum (2000: 104) points out: “TQM was sound; it was the implementation that was at fault”.

Among the reasons for unsuccessful implementation of TQM in higher education institutions, Seymour (1991) mentions the resistance to change; an insufficient administrative commitment; a high time investment due to personal training; the difficulty of application of TQM tools to the higher education institutions’ environment; little experience of team leaders and staff in working as a team; the concern of the institutions about the results being not sufficient enough.

The ISO 9001:2000 and the excellence models (EFQM) are also among those popular industry-originated models that have been applied to higher education now and then. ISO creates a good system for quality management but the function of its production process is too general; whereas EFQM do not have a real system and can only be applicable successfully to excellent organisations (Csizmadia 2006: 61).

Thus, as it has been stated above, the implementation of quality management models taken directly from industry and applied to all the higher education institutions are fraught with being misfit with their core activities (teaching, learning and research). In this respect, the development of quality management models that would take into consideration the specific characteristics of higher education institutions has recently been a big issue in the field. The modern literature proposes a number of models for education quality. This chapter focuses on describing some of the most popular models and their features. Based on the synthesis of the features common for all of these models, some criteria will be developed for the purpose of answering the research question of this study.

2.1.2 Dill’s model for academic quality management

In his model, Dill (1992) suggests that a higher education programme may be developed as an interrelated system. There are various sources which supply students within this system. In this system the education of students is carried out through a designed programme that features specific educational processes, and then the placement of students with various customers takes place. The educational programme has to be designed and redesigned continually, taking into consideration stakeholder’s needs as well as organizational knowledge and expertise. The academic quality management includes the following elements:
Source management and student selection; programme design; research on customers’ needs; the design and management of a supporting quality information system.

**Source management and student selection.** Due to the growing competition for student recruitment, there has been a growing interest in enrollment management including continuous efforts to increase student applications, student acceptances and student retention. The underlying idea for the development is a concern with student quality and success. An academic quality management approach would emphasise a continual improvement and reliability of the performance of incoming students which is based on measuring academic quality defined as critical by people involved in designing the academic programme. This might include not only the assessment of students for admission on critical measures, but also the assessment of freshman students as a means of validating the students’ preparation and the effectiveness of the admissions selection process in providing students with little unwanted variation on the essential criteria for academic quality.

Source management would presuppose finding and following higher education institutions in terms of quality of their student product over time. This might include the admission/rejection rates of higher education institutions’ graduates recorded over a long period of time, as well as the retention rate of their admitted graduates.

Moreover, from an academic quality management perspective a great emphasis would be placed on the connection between the selection of students and their long-term success, as well as on how the student selection and source management would be integrated with the process of academic programme design.

**Academic programme design** presupposes putting more stress on improving individual faculty skills in instructions, course planning and student assessment. Moreover, it also emphasises the importance of cross-functional design teams, including faculty members representing critical specialities necessary for a programme design, as well as individuals with experience in instructional design, educational assessment and the production of materials.

Dill (1992: 68) argues that the application of the concepts derived from the research on design factors associated with quality products in manufacturing settings to academic programme design could be useful. These factors include the use of reliability, product line breadth, manufacturing process flow and sequencing, and change in underlying processes, and they are all associated with variation in quality (Garvin, 1988). Dill (1992: 68) points out that when applied to the academic programme design, certain degree of complexity in programme components may also contribute to variation in academic quality, and the early identification of key academic programme components could also assist in the reduction of predictable variation.
variation. Educational programme-line breadth may also play an important role in increasing quality variation in academic settings, especially since there is little coordinated support for programme design provided by higher education institutions, and academic resources often vary by subject fields.

Another important aspect of the academic programme design is the sequencing of various academic programme components to make student learning more effective. As an example, Dill (1992: 69) refers to the collegial programme and process design introduced at the Havard Business School. The programme design of the school’s MBA degree, including the content and sequencing of each course component, is collegially designed by the school faculty. The school faculty applies the discussion-centered or case study method, which is the dominant mode for instruction in the school, and the school invests in a case research and development unit supporting educational programme. As a result, the Harvard Business School’s investment in programme design has contributed to its development significantly.

Research on customers’ needs. The model emphasizes the importance of research on potential employers and organisational alumni, taking into consideration the relevance of academic skills and knowledge to post-academic success. Dill (1992: 70) states that alumni surveys have contributed to identifying the particular value in the workplace of general components of an undergraduate education or, through analyses of subsets of alumni, of the relevance of specific subject areas to success in different occupational categories. The development of database on alumni could be used to identify predictable and stable alumni placement sectors such as professional education, business, teaching, as well as particular occupational groups. Surveys of alumni concerning aspects of their own education that turned out to be ineffective or inadequate, and also the perceptions of alumni in various occupational groups as to what “quality” academic preparation means to them, could provide higher education institutions with valuable customer research on quality.

Quality information system. What is understood under this notion is a system that includes different measures of the performance of students during the whole educational process, starting from the moment of their application until their completion of the studies; as well as measures of drop-out rates. Dill (1992: 72) argues that many of these measures could be based on students’ samples, using assessments “embedded” in the educational process. Moreover, the application of audits, or extended exit assessments of samples of graduating students might be helpful with receiving additional information on academic quality (Seymour, 1992). However, the problem that arises here is that in spite of a great amount of information available in higher education institution, it is kept in separate offices and support different
functions. The information on entering student performance is gathered and stored by the admissions office, placement exams are conducted by departments (Jewell, 1991b referred in Dill, 1992: 72), and data collected on alumni is usually reserved for public-relations and fund-raising purposes.

Thus, to create an academic quality information system a range of measures are required, including the coordination of the data gathering efforts, the development of common definitions and standards, and the integration of the quality information system with an active initiative in programme and process design (Dill 1992: 72). This emphasizes an important role of leadership in a higher education institution. All in all, the objective is to empower the collegial mechanisms of the academics to improve educational quality and keep them responsible for deciding how quality will be measured, and how the resulting information will be utilised for quality improvement (Dill, 1992: 72).

2.1.3 Generic model for quality management in higher education

This model is suggested by Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002), in which they try to integrate general models for quality addressing educational issues with the model addressing the service areas of higher education. The strategies for addressing the educational issues are based on the generic characteristics derived from the models for educational quality in higher education institutions: the transformative model, the engagement model of programme quality, the learning model and the responsive university model. The service areas are addressed by the techniques taken from TQM.

The central themes that emerge from the models for educational quality are student learning and an active collaboration at the educational delivery level. Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002: 219) examine these points thoroughly and take them as a basis for their generic quality management model. They support the idea expressed by other authors that quality in higher education institution relates strongly to quality of students’ learning, and the focus has to be on enriching the learning experiences for students. It is argued that the improvement of students’ learning experience could be achieved if based on critical dialogue between the learners and teachers about the nature and style of their learning, and also between the teachers about the teaching and learning process, as well as on communication with the external partners. The senior management has to encourage and ensure this ‘transformative process’ which is possible through senior management commitment, the continuous improvement culture and the team interaction. Although these notions may resemble TQM.
principles focusing on the process control of the service, in the context of ‘transformative process’ the emphasis is on the changes in students’ cognitive and affective areas so that the experience ‘continues to make an impact long after any formal programme…’ (Harvey and Knight 1996: 118).

Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002: 222) argue that to implement the generic model a ‘shared vision’ has to be developed within the community based on an agreement on how the quality at all levels would be monitored, integrated and improved. The objective is “to obtain a seamless meshing of different approaches to quality” (Srikanthan and Dalrymple 2002: 223). Through the dialogues the participants would develop common principles of the institution’s values, methods for effective operation, and new organizational solutions to create a foundation for an ‘organisational architecture’ for learning. The aim of this process is to make students the ultimate customer in service-delivery areas and to encourage the academics to think ‘in terms patterns of variation in the learning experience, rather than that of teaching methods’ (Bowden and Marton, 1998: 279).

According to Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002: 223), this would maintain a continuous synergy with a ‘deep learning cycle’ (Senge et al., 1994: 46) of ‘awareness and sensibilities’ about the higher education institution’s role in the community. The generic model for quality management has, therefore, as its objective, creation of a synergy between educational and organisational theories.

Thus, the elements of the model can be summarized as follows:

- “Transformation of the learners, enhancing them through adding value to their capability and ultimately ‘empowering’ them” (Srikanthan and Dalrymple 2002: 220). As a result, the policies, concerning quality have to be learning-oriented with the emphasis on the student experience.

- A synergistic collaboration, i.e. collaboration not only between teacher and students, but also among organizations and with the external community. As Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002: 218) notice that “this means being student-centered in programmes, community-centered in outreach and nation-centered in research”.

- Leadership in higher education institutions plays an important role in creating and securing an appropriate collegial culture.
2.1.4 Massy’s six quality process domains model

The quality process domains model is by its essence, a programme of teaching and learning quality-process reviews, conducted in 1996 at the range of the higher education institutions in Hong Kong for the purpose of assuring value for money in the higher education sector. The goals of the model is “to focus attention on teaching and learning, assist institutions in their efforts to improve teaching and learning quality, and enable the institutions to discharge their obligation to maintain accountability for quality” (Massy, 1997: 255). The model is intended to be operationalised in the setting where higher education institutions must themselves make the decisions with respect to quality perspectives, and there is a variety among and within institutions as a necessary condition for an effective higher education sector. The main idea is therefore, not to limit the ways of the delivery of teaching and learning quality by specifying particular approaches, but rather to investigate whether these quality dimensions have been thought through carefully by institutions and academics, and whether the choices made are then well-articulated and defended.

In his model, Massy (1997; 2003) reviews organisational, faculty and departmental education quality processes on the basis of six domains, which include determination of desired learning outcomes, design of curricula, design of teaching and learning processes, design of student examination and the use of examination results, implementation quality, and commitment of resources to education quality work.

The first domain, determination of desired learning outcomes, stresses the goals of study programmes and how they relate to students’ needs comprising students’ prior knowledge, abilities, further employment opportunities and quality of life.

Design of curriculum addresses the processes to design and improve programme curriculum. These include: programme contents and from what perspective it will be taught; the role of design inputs from students, staff and employers; what will be done to create a coherent curriculum by collecting systematic feedback and acting upon it while adjusting it to programme goals when necessary; assurance of the standard of academic programmes offered by organisations.

The third domain, design of teaching and learning processes, presupposes processes to design, review and improve teaching and learning methods, materials, and students’ learning environment, which include considering desired and achieved learning outcomes, the role of external inputs and students’ views, and innovation to improve student learning.
Design of student examination and the use of examination results highlights processes to design, review and improve the examination of students and its relation to educational objectives, including placing responsibility for examination; mechanisms for feedback to improve examination; and processes that connect examination with educational objectives more closely.

Implementation quality implies processes that assure correct, coherent and effective implementation of learning outcomes, curricula, teaching, learning and examination design and processes that include: staff recruitment and development; peer review; measures of students’ learning experience outside the classroom; teacher-student interaction.

The sixth domain, commitment of resources to education quality work, focuses on the use of resources by organisations to enhance quality work; adequate funding of quality management processes; the establishment of incentives for rewarding good performance in delivering quality education; if unit levels receive sufficient funding to perform their mission.

2.1.5 Holistic educational development model

The main objectives of the holistic educational development model developed by D’Andrea and Gosling (2005: 180) are students’ ‘transformation and educational development. In the model, the authors also suggest ways of combining quality assurance and educational development within institutions to improve the quality of students’ experience of higher education. Gosling and D’Andrea (2001: 11) argue that a quality system is a system that “not only performs a regulatory function but one that functions to improve the quality of the educational experience, one that provides a developmental function as well”.

They state that the dilemma outlined above causes some tension in higher education institutions between offices responsible for quality assurance and educational development. The reason for this tension arises from the differences between these values, because quality assurance concentrates on quality assessment and educational development concentrates on quality enhancement.

Gosling and D’Andrea (2001: 11) see, therefore, the holistic educational development model as the one that combines the enhancement of learning and teaching with the quality and standards monitoring processes in a higher education institution. In this model, educational development includes the initiation and management of three major areas of work: academic development, learning development and quality development.
According to the model, the activities of the educational development office would create a ‘quality loop’. It takes the development, implementation and evaluation of the educational provision full circle by supporting the process of curriculum development with knowledge of current pedagogical theory and practice. It would also enhance the necessary professional development for teaching staff on teaching/learning strategies that would meet the educational goals and objectives of the curriculum developed.

There is usually little dialogue between the offices responsible for curriculum development and for supporting students’ learning, and for the quality assurance of both, as the responsibilities for these main areas are often separated (Harvey, 1998). A holistic educational development model has as its purpose making links between curriculum development and quality assurance by creating a collegial environment in which to design curriculum that gives advice on assuring the quality of the curriculum developed. Moreover, it can also improve students’ learning development. The linkage between learning development, academic development and quality development brings the expertise of each area into the educational process. It is likely to produce a better result providing students with a more sufficient support to achieve their educational objectives.

Gosling and D’Andrea (2001: 12) state that this model offers many advantages for a higher education institution, staff and students. First, it creates the linkage between quality assurance and educational development by supporting teaching activities to enhance the students’ educational experience. Secondly, it facilitates the dialogue between those responsible for quality assurance and the ones responsible for educational development about the internal and external quality assessment policies and procedures. As a result, “there is less duplication of effort and a more holistic understanding of the relationship between quality assurance and learning enhancement” (Gosling and D’Andrea, 2001: 12). Besides, the cooperation between the quality assurance processes and the quality enhancement processes can lead to a more effective dissemination of educational policies within an institution and maintaining good standards across the range of institutional provision.

The authors of the holistic educational development model claim that this is “a win-win model” for the whole higher education sector because of the capacity of the model to meet the need for public accountability while ensuring the academic autonomy of a higher education institution.

Another important aspect of the model is that it focuses on practice rather than on documentation. The outcomes of the model are represented not as measurable scores but as development of quality assurance skills and processes accepted by staff as being beneficial for
the students. The academics are free to decide themselves upon appropriate activities to achieve their goals; there is no methodology or ideology imposed on the academics, as the model is based on their reflective practice. “Quality development replaces trust in academics to investigate and evaluate their practices and to find ways of improving quality” (Gosling and D’Andrea, 2001: 13).

2.1.6 Three quality dimensions model

This model was developed by Mergen et al. (2000) and applied in the college of Business at the Rochester Institute of Technology in the late 1980s. The authors build their model on Juran’s model, i.e. Juran’s Triology, consisting of the following components: planning, control and improvement. Juran and Gryna (1993) compare managing quality to managing finance and marketing, explaining that to manage quality effectively there has to a plan (quality planning), control (quality control) and improvement (quality improvement).

The main motivating factor for developing such a model was the authors’ belief that the college needed a framework to apply the quality management principles to the college educational activities (curriculum design, research and teaching) more effectively, since the college was suffering from declining student enrollment, low research productivity and decreasing student retention (Mergen et al. 2000: 345). The model provides a framework to identify research, teaching and operational improvement opportunities. Furthermore, the authors suggest that their model’s comprehensive quality framework could encourage the discussion in the quality management literature about well-structured frameworks of quality used in education. The model represents a set of measurement parameters to evaluate the quality of education. The quality management framework consists of three dimensions: quality of design, quality of conformance and quality of performance. A brief description of these dimensions (i.e. parameters) is given below. According to Mergen et al., there is a logical interaction between these three dimensions, i.e. low level of quality performance may influence the quality design and quality conformance dimensions. Similarly, if the level of quality conformance is low, it may require to improve quality control techniques or to make changes in the quality design. This feedback mechanism leads to the continuous improvement aspect of the relationship. The authors suggest that the model could be used by higher education institutions to adapt to integrating quality into operational, curricular and research related issues. It could also be applied as a guideline for the faculties which would like to pursue research in quality to find out which parameter of quality could fit for them better.
given their discipline and research interest. It would give them a better understanding of the
degree of contribution that different disciplines make to different aspects of quality. The
model is also suggested to be used to design/redesign the curriculum and individual courses,
as well as running higher education institutions’ daily activities.

Quality of design is about setting up the characteristics of a good education in a given market
segment at a given cost, which is determined by the quality of the data about stakeholders and
their requirements; the quality of the process intended for translating these requirements into a
product; the continuous improvement of the quality design process.

Quality of conformance concentrates on the satisfaction of the designed requirements,
including the cost requirements (uniformity and dependability). The less variance there is
from the designed requirements for the products and services, the better is the quality of
conformance. Consequently, each design specification needs a certain set of measures to be
developed to assure that design requirements are met.

Quality of performance deals with the level of students’ satisfaction with the education they
get. It is a measure of the value that students derive from their education. It includes
stakeholders’ satisfaction, the level of endowment, student enrolment, fresh employees’
salaries and career advancement.

2.1.7 Common features of the quality management models. The criteria for QM approaches

Each model discussed above has its own perspective on what quality in a higher education
institution is. However, in the models the authors develop some generic actions on how
quality has to be designed, implemented and maintained in a higher education institution:

- The determination of desired learning outcomes emphasises the goals of the course or
  programme and their relations to student needs, including students’ capability, further
  employment opportunities and quality of life.

- The design of curricula focuses on the development of coherent curriculum,
  programme with a degree of flexibility appropriate to curriculum/ programme goals.

- The design of teaching and learning processes highlights the need for the design,
  review and improvement of teaching and learning methods, materials, and students’
  learning environment.

- The design of student evaluation requires activities to design, review and improve the
  examination processes and how well they relate to educational objectives and to use
  the evaluation results.
There has to be a focus on design, implementation and maintenance of a quality management system, including effective resource management and quality information systems.

The importance of measuring stakeholders’ demands and satisfaction is also stressed.

After the comparison of the actions suggested, three focal points emerge from them: student learning, an active interaction around it and management tools to maintain and improve the quality of the educational activities in higher education institutions.

All the models have a common thrust on enhancing students’ learning experience, when one defines ‘quality’. The ‘model for academic quality management’ of Dill (1992: 64-65) requires a higher education programme to be developed as an interrelated system which would contribute to effective students’ learning through various sources within the system. The ‘generic model for quality management in higher education’ of Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002: 220) suggests that quality policies have to be learning-oriented with the emphasis on students’ experience, ‘empowering students through adding value to their capability and ultimately empowering them’. In the ‘quality process domains model’, Massy (1997: 225) maintains that organisational, faculty and departmental education quality processes should be designed in the way that they lead to the improvement of student’s learning. In the ‘holistic educational development model’, Gosling and D’Andrea (2001: 11) see a quality system as a system “that functions to improve the quality of the educational experience… and provides a developmental function as well”. It emphasises the necessity of ‘linking curriculum development with quality management’ to enhance students’ learning development.

Mergen et al. (2000: 347) develops a set of measurement parameters that would evaluate the quality of education during different stages of the educational processes. This would enable higher education institutions to improve the educational quality and create an organizational environment encouraging students’ learning motivation and development.

All the models mentioned above stress an active interaction at the level of the education delivery. The ‘model for academic quality management’ (Dill, 1992: 68-69) highlights an application of cross-functional design teams to programme/course planning and design, developing a holistic view of student abilities and needs. The ‘generic model for quality management in higher education’ (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2002: 220) requires the students’ learning experience to be based on a dialogue between a teacher and students, as well as between higher education institutions themselves and with the external community.
The ‘quality process domains model’ (Massy, 1997: 256, 260) foresees teaching and learning to be based on teacher-student interaction, mentoring and co-operative peer learning. The ‘holistic educational development model’ (Gosling and D’Andrea, 2001: 11, 15) underlines the creation of teaching and learning strategies that would meet the educational goals of the curriculum development and would contribute to the improvement of the quality of students’ experience of the higher education as well. The ‘three quality dimensions model’ (Mergen et al., 2000) focuses on the provision of a framework for quality management to identify research, teaching and operational improvement opportunities which would stimulate students’ interest in studying in a higher education institution.

All the models highlight also the application of different management tools to coordinate the educational processes at all levels of a higher education institution and, as a result, to contribute to effective students’ learning. In the ‘model for academic quality management’ Dill (1992: 67) emphasizes the importance of source management and management of a supporting quality information system, which have as their focus a continual improvement and reliability of the performance of incoming students and measuring the performance of students during the whole educational process, respectively. The ‘generic model for quality management in higher education’ (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2002: 220) gives ‘leadership’ an important role in creating and securing an appropriate collegial culture in order to achieve ‘transformation of the learners’. In his model, Massy (1997: 257, 260) proposes an ‘implementation quality’ dimension that comprises processes within an institution to assure correct, coherent and effective implementation of learning outcomes, curricular and teaching/learning processes. The ‘holistic educational development model’ (Gosling and D’Andrea, 2001: 11) maintains the linkage between the educational development with the quality and standards monitoring processes in a higher education institution. Gosling and D’Andrea (2001: 11-12) argue that the students’ learning experience will favour from this combination because of students receiving a more sufficient support from the expertise of three different areas, i.e. educational development, academic development and quality development. Mergen et al. (2000: 347-349) examine an educational quality from a managerial perspective. They suggest that educational activities have to be addressed in three stages, i.e. planning (‘quality of design’), implementation (‘quality of conformance’) and control (‘quality of performance’). From their point of view, the interaction between these three dimensions creates a good feedback mechanism that leads to the continuous improvement of the research, teaching/learning activities and other operations within a higher education institution.
Thus, based on the common features of the discussed above quality management models and the three focal points derived from the models, I have developed some criteria showing what the authors in quality management emphasise when they address ‘quality’ in their models. These criteria include:

- students’ needs and employment opportunities
- employer’s expectations and requirements
- design of programme/curriculum
- teaching/learning skills and methods
- staff training and development
- students’ learning environment
- leadership
- teamwork
- resource management

Basing on the criteria, one can understand what ‘quality values’ the authors stress in their quality management models when making judgements about ‘quality’ in a higher education institution, as each ‘quality value’ focuses on different criteria.

Through the application of the criteria to the quality management models, it is possible to define how the authors of the models perceive ‘quality’ and what approaches to quality management they use, when addressing quality issues in a higher education institution. However, as a research tool, the criteria alone may not be analytically sufficient for differentiating between various approaches. To perform such an analysis, there is a need for an additional research tool which may help to determine the essence of each quality management approach. From my point of view, the ‘values’ of quality can, therefore, be used as such a tool, providing this study with some sort of a theoretical indicator based on which the identification of approaches to quality management will become possible.

All in all, the next section will be devoted to examining the types of ‘quality values’ described in the literature and what points are emphasised by each of the value. It will also explain how the criteria for QM models relate to the ‘quality values’.
2.2 Meta-perspective for analysing quality management in HE

2.2.1 Approaches to quality management in higher education: Brennan and Shah’s ‘quality values’ perspective

According to the literature, the choice of an approach to quality management, as well as quality assessment depends on “quality values” and “…conceptions about what constitutes high quality in higher education” to a great extent (Brennan and Shah, 2000: 14). Brennan and Shah differentiate between four main types of quality values stressing different focuses in approaches to quality management. These are ‘academic’, ‘managerial’, ‘pedagogic’ and ‘employment focus’ (Tab.1) (Brennan and Shah, 2000: 14).

In the first approach (‘academic’) the focus is on the subject field which is associated with professorial authority and where the academic values are of great importance. “Conceptions of quality are based on subject affiliation and vary across the institution, which has limited scope to define and assess quality.” (Brennan and Shah, 2000: 14).

The ‘managerial’ type has institutional policies and procedures as the main focus of assessment, underlying ‘good management practices’ as the key factor of quality production. The characteristics of quality are considered as being ‘invariant’ across the institution. The principles of TQM are used as basic theoretical background for this approach. As Brennan and Shah (2001: 14) state, this approach has a potential to be applied to all the activities of a higher education institution, not just the academic.

The third type described as ‘pedagogic’ focuses on people and pedagogical aspects of the process, i.e. teaching skills and methods, staff training and development. The characteristics of quality are regarded as invariant across the whole institution. Unlike the first type, a lot of attention is paid here to a delivery process rather than the content of education.

The ‘employment-focus’ approach emphasises learning outcomes, standards and output characteristics of graduates. This approach deals with ‘customer’ requirements where the customers are often seen as the employers of graduates. “It tends to take into account both subject specific and core characteristics of high quality education” (Brennan and Shah, 2000: 15). Quality characteristics are regarded as both invariant and variant, which depends on a subject.
Table 1 ‘Values of quality’ (Brennan and Shah 2000: 14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>‘Academic’</th>
<th>Subject focus – knowledge and curricula</th>
<th>Professorial authority</th>
<th>Quality values vary across institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type 2</td>
<td>‘Managerial’</td>
<td>Institutional focus – policies and procedures</td>
<td>Managerial authority</td>
<td>Quality values invariant across institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 3</td>
<td>‘Pedagogic’</td>
<td>People focus – skills and competencies</td>
<td>Staff developers/educationalist influence</td>
<td>Quality values invariant across institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 4</td>
<td>‘Employment focus’</td>
<td>Output focus – graduate standards/learning outcomes</td>
<td>Employment/professional authority</td>
<td>Quality values both variant and invariant across institutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.2 The relationship between the ‘quality values’ and the criteria for QM models

As it has been mentioned above, looking at the focuses of the ‘quality values’ developed by Brennan and Shah, it is possible to make a connection between the ‘quality values’ and the criteria for QM models developed in section 2.1.7. (Tab.2)

The ‘academic’ quality values highlight the importance of the subject field. The enhancement of ‘quality’ is seen through the improvement of programme/curriculum design, making the programme components more coherent with each other and fitting in with the students’ learning needs. From this point of view, the ‘academic’ quality values can be related to the design of programme and design of curriculum criteria. The ‘managerial’ quality values focus on institutions themselves, their policies and procedures, underlying management principles as key factors for achieving quality in all the activities of the institutions. The relevant criteria for this type of ‘quality values’ can be regarded leadership, teamwork and resource management. The ‘pedagogic’ quality values emphasise the development of people engaged in the educational activities. The main priority is given here to ‘how’ rather than to ‘what’ to teach and learn. The focus of the ‘pedagogic’ quality values coincides, therefore, with the teaching/learning skills and methods, staff training and development, students’ learning environment criteria. The main emphasis of the ‘employment focus’ quality values is on learning outcomes and graduates’ output characteristics, where the employers’ requirements are also taken into account as well. The relevant criteria for the ‘employment focus’ would be employers’ needs and requirements, students’ needs and employment opportunities.
Thus, an attempt at synthesizing the ‘quality values’ perspective and the criteria for QM models could be used as a meta-perspective for integrating several different quality management models, and then as a tool for the analysis of the journal articles in order to find out what approaches to quality management the current researchers on quality in higher education institutions embrace.

Table 2 The relationship between the ‘quality values’ and the criteria for QM models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Values*</th>
<th>Focus*</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ‘Academic’      | ‘Subject affiliation’ | Design of programme  
|                 |        | Design of curriculum |
| ‘Managerial’    | ‘Good management practices’ | Leadership  
|                 |        | Teamwork  
|                 |        | Resource management |
| ‘Pedagogic’     | ‘Pedagogical aspects’ | Teaching/learning skills and methods  
|                 |        | Staff training and development  
|                 |        | Students’ learning environment |
| ‘Employment focus’ | ‘Learning outcomes’ | Employers’ needs and requirements  
|                 |        | Students’ needs and employment opportunities |

*see Brennan and Shah (2000: 14) for the ‘quality values’ and focus
Chapter 3. Research Design and Methodology

The central purpose of this study is to explore 1) what approaches to quality management at the institutional level are commonly-accepted by the current researchers on quality; 2) who/what the researchers use as a framework of reference; 3) how theoretically grounded their arguments about quality management in higher education are; 4) what criteria the researchers emphasise while analyzing the approaches.

In this chapter the research design and methodology used for achieving this objective of the study will be presented. In particular, the chosen research paradigm, the way of reasoning and the used research methods will be explained to the reader to guide him/her through the process of this study.

3.1 The choice of an approach to the research: research strategy

In the methodological literature there is a distinction between two basic research strategies: quantitative and qualitative research. On the face of it, there is a simplistic way of distinguishing between these two types of research strategies, i.e. the fact that quantitative researchers employ measurement and qualitative researcher do not. However, the differences are deeper than just the issue of quantification. For many writers, quantitative and qualitative research differ with respect to their epistemological foundations, which concern the question of what is regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline, and, in particular, whether the same principles and procedures as used in the natural sciences can/should be applied to the social world (Bryman, 2004: 11). From this point of view, they differentiate between two epistemological positions known as positivism and interpretivism. They are two paradigms that are “essentially concerned with understanding phenomena through two different lenses” (Cohen et al., 2001: 27). From the positivist perspective, the research world is external and objective, where the observer is independent of what is observed; the focus is on facts; research is directed to identify causality; the researcher formulates concepts for measurement; the samples used for research are usually large; this type of research attempts to discover general laws explaining the nature of the reality (Coleman et al., 1999). In interpretivism, the world is regarded as being socially constructed and subjective with the observer being a part of the world observed; the focus is on eliciting understanding and meaning; the samples used for research are small and explored in depth and during certain time-period; the researcher is
the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; and the research findings are
 descriptive, not arrived at by means of statistical procedures (Coleman et al., 1999).
 Thus, the \textit{quantitative research} can be explained as a research strategy that emphasises
 quantification in the collection and analysis of data, and that has included the practices and
 norms of the natural scientific model and, in particular, of positivism.
 On the contrary, \textit{qualitative research} can be explained as a research strategy that usually
 emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data and, that has
 declined the practices and norms of the natural scientific model in favour of the ways in
 which individuals interpret their social world (Bryman, 2004: 20).
 In order to answer the research questions, the qualitative research strategy has been chosen
 because the objective of this study is to gain in-depth understanding what makes the current
 researchers’ choose particular quality management approaches, to look into their arguments
 and see what they focus on when making their choice. It seems that the methods used in the
 qualitative research will suit the purpose of this study most.
 I have, therefore, decided to collect data via \textit{qualitative content analysis}, i.e. analysing the
 articles taken from one of the scientific journals on quality in higher education. The research
 design and methodology are presented in detail below.

\subsection*{3.2 Sample selection}

Sampling is usually applied in the empirical research because it is too unwieldy, too
 expensive, too time consuming or simply unnecessary to study an entire population (Goezt
 and LeCompte, 1984: 66). In the literature one differentiates between two basic types of
 sampling: probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is usually used in
 quantitative research because it randomly draws representatives from wider population and,
 thus, allows the researcher to make generalizations from the findings of the study (Cohen et
 al., 2001). It has to be mentioned that a probability sample has less risk of bias than a non-
 probability sample (Cohen et al., 2001).
 However, non-probability sampling is considered to be the most appropriate sampling
 strategy for qualitative research, which is usually done on a smaller scale (Merriam, 1998).
 The most common type of non-probability sampling is purposive sampling. Unlike
 probability sampling, the choice of the subjects/objects for observation in non-probability
 sampling is made by the researcher. It may be regarded as a disadvantage as it does not
 provide a reliable basis for generalisations. However, an advantage of a purposive sampling is
that by its means, the researcher can select information-rich cases from which the most can be learned about the central issues of the research (Patton, 1990).

Thus, for the purpose of this qualitative research, I used non-probability, purposive sampling in order to generate data. I have chosen to base the empirical research on the articles published in the journal called *Quality in Higher Education*. The rationale behind this choice can be summarized as follows: first, the journal is one of the most popular journals both among the researchers and practitioners in the field of higher education. The journal covers various aspects of quality in higher education, especially ‘reported research results assessing the impact of quality assurance systems, procedures and methodologies; theoretical analyses of quality and quality initiatives in higher education; comparative evaluation and international aspects of practice and policy with a view to identifying transportable methods and good practice’ (from Aims and Scopes of *Quality in Higher Education*). Such a wide scope of aspects covered in the journal provides this study with many-sided research material and can, therefore, make its results more interesting and valuable.

Another selection criterion in favour of this journal is related to feasibility and access. Being one of the key journals in the field, it is easily accessible, and the articles with the latest trends in higher education quality are published regularly in new volumes.

Moreover, the purposive sampling strategy was used for selecting the articles for the analysis from the journal. As a starting point, I suppose that all of the articles cannot be analysed; sampling and selection are essential. Therefore, the question that arises here is, first of all, how many articles and which ones?

Firstly, following the line of logic, the articles have been chosen on the basis of whether their content is related to the area of quality management in higher education, in particular quality management approaches. Secondly, when selecting the articles, the preference has been given to the empirical cases the researchers have studied. Since this type of articles focuses on the description and analysis of the application process of the phenomenon under investigation, as well as the results of this process, the study of these cases may have more practical value and serve as guidelines for those interested in improving the institutional quality management.

One additional selection criterion is the authors’ position in relation to the phenomenon they describe in their articles. In general, they can be divided in two groups: those researchers who come from the ‘outside’ and study the phenomenon they are not involved in; and those authors who have been involved in the phenomenon and report about their experiences and points of view as practitioners. Being interested in the practical perspective of the issue, I
attempted to include the articles written by the second group of the researchers. During the research twenty articles were analysed.

3.3 Research method and its characteristics: qualitative content analysis

Taking into consideration the purpose of this study, gathering and analysis of data was carried out qualitatively via ‘soft’ data, i.e. document analysis. This method is considered to be the most prevalent approach to the qualitative analysis of documents (Bryman 2004: 392). It comprises a searching for underlying themes in the materials which are being analysed. Document analysis can be characterized in the following way: the use of existing material; being relatively easily accessible; the absence of direct contact with the research object; looking at the material used from a different perspective than at the time of its production (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 1999 quoted in Csizmadia, 2006: 117). In document analysis, an important characteristic is that the material being used is usually produced by other researchers. These characteristics (‘absence of direct contact with the object observed’ and being produced by other researchers’) lead to some limitations of the method. These are the following: it can not be influenced by a researcher; and it is difficult to guarantee that the documents under analysis answer research questions.

Another point is that, from an interpretative perspective, it may seem that in qualitative research methods, the process of gathering and analysis of data is based on subjectivity rather than on objectivity. As Alvesson and Björkman (1992: 41 quoted in Stensaker, 2004: 84) point out, in this way data to a larger extent are actively ‘constructed’ and ‘picked out’ rather than being passively ‘gathered’.

All the same, this research aims at obtaining data from primary sources, and analyzing the primary data. To primary sources, Charles (1998: 369) attribute “…firsthand accounts by originators of works and behaviour, or the books, articles and documents in which firsthand accounts are reported.” In this study, the category of the material being used for carrying out document analysis is research publications/articles from the journal Quality in Higher Education.

3.4 Validity and reliability

Validity refers to whether 'you are observing, identifying or ”measuring” what you say you are’ (Mason, 1996: 24). The three criteria suggested by Kvale (1989, quoted in Stensaker,
have been used to determine the validity of this study. The criterion of correspondence is about whether phenomena under investigation correspond to the real world. The criterion of coherence is concerned with the logic and consistency of the results. The criterion of pragmatics deals with whether it is possible to generalise the study. The former two criteria refer to what is often called internal validity, and the latter refers to what is often called external validity (Østerud 1995, quoted in Stensaker, 2004: 88).

According to Bush (2002: 66), internal validity “relates to the extent that research findings accurately represent the phenomena under investigation”. In the given study the criterion of correspondence is addressed in several ways. First of all, the emphasis is put on variation in the researchers’ academic background and positions during the application process of the quality management model at the described higher education institutions. Secondly, the researchers represent higher education institutions from different countries. All these give an opportunity for looking into quality management approaches from various perspectives. The next question is whether the data collected from the articles are logical and consistent, which points out to the criterion of coherence. It is represented through a careful choice of data sources and a data generation method. Furthermore, the quotations have been focused on the issues which have a direct relevance for the study.

External validity (the criterion of pragmatics) refers to ‘the extent to which findings from research can be applied or generalized to the wider population, which is represented by the sample or to other similar settings’ (Bush, 2002: 67). Yin (1994) suggests two distinct ways of generalizing: statistical generalization and analytical generalization. As Yin (1994) further explains that in statistical generalization, an inference is drawn about a population on the basis of empirical data gathered about a sample. In a quantitative research, the ability to make statistical generalizations to other settings or people is ensured through such conditions as random sampling and a large sample size (Merriam, 1998). However, in analytical generalization, the researcher is striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory (Yin, 1994). Since a number of the articles chosen for this study do not make a statistically representative sample, the most appropriate method of generalization in this type of research is analytical generalization, although the possibilities for representativeness are limited here, which can be regarded as a weakness for the validity of the study. Another problem, which arises during the document analysis when the aim is not only to manifest the content but also to uncover the authors’ symbolic expressions, is an increasing potential for an invalid conjecture to be made by the researcher. Thus, the best I can do is to
attempt to make the context in question more explicit, describing it as completely as possible in order to facilitate the readers’ understanding and interpretation of the findings of the study.

Reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated by repeating a research procedure or method (Merriam, 1998). A study is regarded to be more valid if the repeated study has produced the same results (Merriam, 1998). Unlike a quantitative research design where high reliability can always be achieved through independent measuring giving the same results, within a qualitative research design it proves to be more difficult “to fulfill the demands for many independent and identical measurements” (Stensaker, 2004: 92). However, within a qualitative research design a study may still be replicated by other researchers, if the researcher’s actions are described and documented during the research process (Silverman, 1993: 146). Thus, reliability during document analysis will depend on whether the categories generated for the collection of data and the research tools used during the analysis are identical, as well as the procedure of their application.

In order to enhance the reliability of the study, a schedule for collecting the data in terms of the generated categories and research tools was pre-tested by using it for gathering data from a number of articles. Moreover, the schedule was revised afterwards, and further cases were selected to sharpen it up.

Nevertheless, one condition which may have a negative influence on reliability of the study is the question whether the gathering of the articles was carried out accurately enough and in an objective way. The main criteria for collecting the articles was the fact that whether their titles and abstracts were focused on such notions as quality management or approaches to quality management at an institutional level. At this point the problems connected to objectivity and cognitive bias may arise, i.e. whether the author of the study managed to understand and interpret the ideas implied in the titles and the abstracts in such a way that the context of the articles is relevant to the research question of the study. Thus, it has to be mentioned that the author is aware of this weak point, but due to the scarcity of time there were not many ways of dealing with it.

3.5 Methods of the analysis

Kvale (1996) suggest several main approaches to qualitative data analysis: categorization of meaning, structuring of meaning through narratives (descriptions and quotations), interpretation of meaning and ad hoc methods for generating meaning. Meaning
categorization is about reducing long statements to simple categories (Kvale, 1996). The interpretation of meaning means to go “beyond what is directly said to work out structures and relations of meaning not immediately apparent in a text;” and “this requires a certain distance from what is said, which is achieved by a methodical or theoretical stance, recontextualising what is said in a specific conceptual context” (Kvale, 1996: 201). The ad hoc approach to generating meaning can be defined as “a variety of commonsense approaches to the text under analysis, as well as sophisticated textual or quantitative methods, can be used to bring out the meanings of different parts of the material” (Kvale, 1996: 193).

For the purpose of this study, ad hoc methods will be applied for the analysis of the research findings. These include descriptions and quotations, categorization of meaning and interpretation of meaning. Moreover, the combination of deductive and inductive approaches will be used to analyse the research findings as well.

Taking into consideration the validity of analysis, it has to be mentioned that the greatest strength and the greatest weakness of a qualitative research and analysis is a human factor (Patton, 1990). Thus, during qualitative analysis a researcher “needs to do the very best with his/her full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study” (Patton, 1990: 372). The analysis of the research findings will be carried out having in mind this remark.
Chapter 4. Investigating Quality Management Approaches

4.1 Who/what do the researchers in quality management use as a framework of reference?

The analysis of the articles shows that it is very challenging to categorise them from the perspective of who and/or what the researchers refer to when writing about institutional quality management. The aspects which cause this are the following:

First, the researchers do not have a consistent framework of reference. In some articles which have been analysed, a framework is based only on odd references and quotations, i.e. the researchers have ad hoc framework of reference. For example, the framework of reference in Duening and Kadipasaoglu’s article (1996: 57-64) about the importance of ‘team-driven change in higher education institutions’ consists of the writings of Csikzentmihalyi (1990, 1993) and Katzenbach & Smith (1993) about ‘key principles of teamwork’ and organisational change, as well as quotations of different authors, such as Byham (1994), Heidegger (1962) and some others. Another example is the article about measuring and increasing students’ satisfaction written by Popli (2005: 17-24), in which the framework of reference is also limited to referring to single statements made by other researchers with respect to this topic. When discussing what customer satisfaction is and how it can be measured, the author of the article cites the ideas expressed by such authors as Kotler & Fox (1995), Stanton (1994), as well as the studies presented by Palihawadana & Holmes (1999), Bowes et al. (1998).

Secondly, when discussing their empirical findings, in particular it concerns case studies or the results of some projects initiated by the government or international organizations, some researchers tend to refer to normative documents which are sometimes numerous and lack certain cohesion between each other. This creates some sort of blurred picture of what or who the researchers choose as a framework of reference, since it seems that they attempt to support or illustrate their discussions and arguments by as many official sources as possible, without having any system in mind. One of the examples is Barrow’s (1999: 27-36) article about the implementation of quality-management systems in New Zealand polytechnics, in which he refers to several documents, the State Sector Act from 1988 and the Public Finance Act, 1989, concerning requirements to organizations (including higher education sector) to report about their financial and non-financial performance; then the Hawke report from 1988 suggesting uniformity of higher education’ goals and the reduction of the distinction between the
different types of institutions; as well as the 1989 Education Act and the 1990 Education Amendment Act which discussed the necessity for polytechnics to have accountability mechanisms in place to assure their stakeholders of provision of quality education. As it can be seen from the example, the number of the documents referred to is quite large, covering a wide spectrum of quality agenda issues, and thus, making it difficult to understand on actually what references the discussion is based on.

The Use of Theoretical Knowledge Developed Outside the Field of Higher Education as a Framework of Reference

The authors of the articles also use theories taken from the studies of different researchers who may belong to completely different fields and not necessarily higher education. Does it mean that the field of quality assurance has no theories of its own, or perhaps the researchers are just not aware of such? The possible answers to this question will be presented further down in this section.

One of the most highly-quoted and referred fields, except the field of higher education, is sociology. In their articles, the researchers attempt to find the solutions of the problems arising in different aspects of internal quality processes, especially the ones related to human activities and development (for example, teaching and learning, organizational structure and culture, curriculum design) by the means of principles and theories developed by sociologists. For example, when suggesting approaches to quality enhancement of teaching and learning, Knight (2006: 32) uses Bourdieu’s idea of different ‘forms of capital’ (‘symbolic capital’, ‘cultural capital’, ‘social capital’ and ‘economic capital’), noticing that ‘teachers’ professional competence is related to the capital that is brought to bear in a field’, where by field he means teaching in higher education.

Another field the researchers often refer to in their analysis is psychology. For example, continuing the topic of the enhancement of teaching and learning, Knight (2006: 35) stresses the importance of ‘motivation for professional learning’ and here his arguments are based on such a psychologist’s ideas as Hertzberg and his two-factor theory of motivation. One more example is the article written by Bolander et al. (2006), in which investigating the role of the core medical curriculum at one of the Swedish universities, and its relationship with the teachers’ teaching goals, the authors (Bolander et al. 2006: 42-43) employ the idea of ‘knowledge encapsulation’ presented by Schmidt and Boshuizen (1992) and Sfard’s (1998)
theory of ‘acquisition and participation metaphors’ which describe cognitive and social views on learning (respectively).

When it comes to the articles where the main focus is on ‘managerial values’, the situation regarding a framework of reference is very similar, with the only exception that here the most referred field is business studies and management. The discussions about different managerial practices undertaken at an institutional level are full of references to the principles and techniques of Total Quality Management. Even though many researchers are skeptical about a successful applicability of all TQM principles to higher education, they do not deny the fact that some of the principles and techniques can contribute to management and enhancement of quality in the field (Duening & Kadipasaoglu, 1996; Moon and Geall, 1996; Popli, 2005; Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2005). The principles which the authors of the articles advocate are ‘customer orientation’, ‘co-operative systems’, ‘leadership’ and ‘teamwork’. As, for example, Moon and Geall (1996: 271) claim about the importance of leadership, there is “…the pressing need for new forms of educational leadership, which are neither importations of outmoded commercial models nor the resurrection of cloisterist paternalism”. Moon and Geall (1996: 271) also notice that “… ‘customer orientation’ is a generally accepted principle in higher education”. These views are still proved to be true by other researchers in their articles, which have been written since then (Coyle, 2003: 201-202; Popli, 2005: 17-24; Jones & de Saram, 2005: 58).

Why do the researchers on higher education tend to resort to the help of the theoretical knowledge developed outside the field? Some possible explanations are:

First of all, the field of higher education in general, and institutional quality management as one of its aspects in particular, are closely connected to other sociological fields due to the nature of their subject of studying i.e. knowledge, its provision and role in the society. Secondly, the field is relatively ‘young’ and still developing, learning from other more experienced sciences in terms of theoretical basis. Without finding the explanations for the processes happening within higher education institutions in their own field, the researchers use the theoretical knowledge developed in other sciences, based on which they will be able to create their own theories adjusted to higher education needs.

On the other hand, the fact that the researchers refer to the authors who belong to other fields, especially those who are well-known in the scientific world may also be interpreted as nothing more than the researchers’ desire to amplify the significance of their study and to have a stronger impact on the readers.
The Use of Theories and Empirical Findings Obtained within the Field of Higher Education as a Framework of Reference

Even though the influence of the theoretical knowledge from other sciences on higher education research is present, the analysis of the articles shows that the researchers on quality in higher education use more theories and empirical findings worked out by their colleagues within their own field (i.e. higher education) than those developed outside. The choice that the researchers make, when referring to these or those authors writing on quality depends on: first, the quality issues covered in the article; second, the approaches being suggested to tackle these issues; third, whether the authors who are used as a framework of reference have any expertise in the area discussed. When the discussion is about managerial aspects of the quality processes (organizational policies, goals, structure, environment, staff and resource management), as well as institutional changes in response to these processes, some of the most highly-referred are the works written by Brennan, Birnbaum, Green, Harvey, Massy, Kells, Trow (in the articles by Anderson, 2006; Brunetto and Farr-Wharton, 2005; Coyle, 2003; Lomas and Nicholls, 2005; Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2005; Rosa et al., 2006; Weusthof, 1995). Birnbaum and, in particular, his work *Management Fads in Higher Education* (2000) are often referred to when the researchers discuss the influence of TQM on development of quality management mechanisms within higher education institutions. For example, in her article about academics’ responses to quality management in some universities in Australia, Anderson (2006: 167-168) supports many academics’ critique concerning the wide employment of quantitative forms of quality measurement in institutional quality assurance. To substantiate her arguments about the negative influence of the quantitative approach to assuring quality, Anderson refers to Birnbaum (2000: 197) who, as Anderson (2006: 167) states, “exploring ‘management fads’ in higher education, argued that ‘most fads emphasise quantification; some go to the extreme of claiming that if something cannot be measured, it cannot be of value’ “. Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2005: 69-81) also mention Birnbaum (2000) and Birnbaum & Deshotels (1999) with respect to their skepticism about ‘the attempts at adaptation of the ‘total quality management’ model as a model for governing quality in higher education’. One can come across Senge’s ideas on how to build ‘learning organisations’ in those articles, where the researchers focus on discussing the ways of successful implementation of a quality agenda (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2005: 65; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2005: 71-74; Duening & Kadipasaoglu, 1996: 61).
Emphasizing the improvement of curricular/programme design and teaching and learning, the researchers often refer to Biggs, Green, Harvey, Knight, Trigwell and Prosser (e.g. the articles by Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Ottewill & Macfarlane, 2004; Horsburgh, 1998; Watty, 2006). The most popular concepts among the researchers here are the ones about ‘quality as transformation’ described by Harvey, Harvey & Knight, or by Harvey & Green; new approaches to teaching/learning styles and evaluation, including: theories of action learning and active learning advanced by Biggs; concepts of ‘deep and surface’ approaches to teaching and learning presented by Prosser and Trigwell.

Common Features in a Framework of Reference

As it has already been mentioned above, to create a certain system out of who/what the researchers use as a framework of reference may be difficult. However, the study has shown that certain authors, as well as certain theories and concepts, are constantly referred to by the researchers when they discuss quality management in higher education institutions. These are: The definitions of quality described by Harvey, Harvey & Knight, and Harvey & Green, when discussing all sorts of quality issues (the articles by Rosa et al., 2006; Watty, 2006; Barrow, 1999; Ottewill and Macfarlane, 2004; Horsburgh, 1998). The researchers employ these definitions as a starting point of their debates, just by describing them, and then they interpret the definitions from the position of what the main objective of the article is. Barrow (1999: 29-30) argues that the definitions of quality proposed by Harvey (1995) can be used as a basis for New Zealand polytechnics to develop their own institutional quality definitions, and, as a result, to establish internal quality management systems. The researcher, therefore, presents Harvey’s definitions (quality as exceptional, as transformation, as value for money, as fitness for purpose) and explains them in terms of their usefulness for meeting the needs of the institutions. In her article, where the main focus is on how to improve and enhance learning and teaching in higher education institutions, Horsburgh (1998: 117-118) also refers to five definitions of quality (quality as exceptionally high standards, as consistency, as fitness for purpose, as value for money, as a transformative process) described by Harvey and Knight (1996). However, in her further discussion she concentrates on the last definition (i.e. quality as a transformative process), arguing that “none of these definitions” (i.e. the first four) “directly encompasses the core activities of learning and teaching. To do this in a rapidly changing world requires a focus on transformation and innovation, with quality monitoring concerned with improvement and enhancement” (Horsburgh, 1998: 115).
Organizational behaviour literature. Here the researchers elaborate on changes of organisational structure and culture caused by quality assurance processes within higher education institutions. The perspectives which they often refer to in connection with this are ‘organisational learning’ and ‘organisational psychology’ perspectives (Brunetto and Farr-Wharton, 2005; Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2005; Strydom et al., 2004). For example, to analyse the role of academics during the implementation of a quality agenda within institutions, Brunetto and Farr-Wharton (2005: 161-167) refer to different researchers on organisational behaviour and organisational culture. Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2005: 71-74) also use organisational learning perspective, in particular the concepts of organisational learning described by Senge (1992), in order to develop an approach to implementation for a holistic model of quality in higher education.

Different approaches to teaching and learning. In their arguments about the improvement and enhancement of teaching and learning quality, the researchers often refer to the works on teaching and learning styles and approaches written by Biggs, Hutchings, Prosser and Trigwell. These authors’ ideas about how to encourage new and more active forms of learning and teaching in order to contribute to quality enhancement have found understanding and support among several researchers on quality, such as Horsburgh (1998), Ottewill & Macfarlane (2004), Lomas and Nicholls (2005), Jones and de Saram (2005).

4.2 How theoretically grounded are their arguments and assessments of quality management in higher education?

As it has been mentioned in the previous section, many of the researchers, whose articles have been analysed, either build their arguments on single references and quotations or just use different documents as an illustration of the background of the phenomenon discussed. The analysis shows that the employment of theories of any kind, especially the theories on quality in higher education is quite rare. Even if the principles or models developed on the basis of the empirical findings and described in the articles have some theoretical rationales behind them, there is little interest shown by the researchers in finding out the connections between the theories and the research results. As Ottewill and Macfarlane (2004: 238) notice, concerning the connections between the principles suggested by them to contribute to ‘scholarship of teaching’ and the theoretical rationales, “… although such connections can be made, arguably most of the principles are more articles of faith than theoretically- or empirically-derived maxims”. When advocating the position that to achieve quality in higher
education it requires a focus on ‘transformation and innovation’, Horsburgh (1998: 115-135) builds her arguments on Harvey and Knight’s (1996) definitions of quality, especially emphasizing the one in which education is regarded as a transformative process with a student being an active participant’. In her further discussion, the researcher gives an explanation of what ‘quality as transformation’ means and identifies several factors which can be ‘important in exploring the extent to which quality monitoring improves and enhances student learning’ (Horsburgh 1998: 126). However, the lack of an explanation of how these factors have been identified and in which way they are related to a theoretical part of the article (i.e. Harvey and Knight’s definitions of quality) makes it difficult to draw lines between the theory and the researcher’s arguments. It again leads to the question whether the solutions suggested by the author have any theoretical basis behind them or whether they are just ‘articles of faith’.

Approaches to Building a Theoretical Basis of Discussions

Despite a scarce use of consistent theories in their discussions of institutional quality, the researchers do provide readers with some theoretical knowledge on the topics presented in the articles.

Taking into consideration the idea of what amount of theoretical knowledge is employed by the researchers in their arguments, the articles can be divided into three groups: theoretically-wide, theoretically-narrow and empirical findings-based approach.

Theoretically-wide approach

In the first group of the articles (i.e. theoretically-wide) (e.g. the articles by Brunetto and Farr-Wharton, 2005; Lomas and Nicholls, 2005; Duening and Kadipasaoglu, 1996; Horsburgh, 1998; Ottewill, 2004; Popli, 2005; Strydom et al., 2004), the theoretical basis for the arguments presented by the researchers can be described as being ‘wide’ or ‘extensive’ in the sense that it may include various theoretical perspectives, concepts, empirical findings obtained by both researchers on quality in higher education and by those coming from other fields, as well as references to national and institutional normative documents, concerning quality management processes at an institutional level. For example, when arguing about the importance of looking at peer review of teaching ‘as a quality-enhancing tool’ which can ‘significantly improve students’ learning experiences if managed properly, Lomas and Nicholls (2005: 137-147) refer to various theoretical perspectives, such as Bingham and Ottewill’s (2001) idea of ‘developmental peer review of teaching as a formative process’,
Hutchings’ (1994) three main arguments for the employment of peer review of teaching and Gosling’s (2002) three models of peer observation of teaching. The authors (2005: 142-143) also employ the ideas and results of empirical study of the researchers who looked into organisational culture and change, as they claim that ‘to implement a programme of peer review of teaching, there is a need to understand the organisational culture and sub-cultures of a university and its departments’. As it can be seen, the theoretical part of the article comprises quite a few theoretical dimensions, covering various aspects of peer review of teaching. Moreover, the theoretical dimensions presented in the theoretically-wide articles lack cohesion between each other, except the fact that they are related to one topic. This is also the case in the article written by Lomas and Nicholls mentioned above, along with some other articles. Such an approach for building a theoretical ground for discussions, therefore, reminds more of a literature review rather than a well-constructed theoretical position. As Brunetto and Farr-Wharton (2005: 175) notice themselves about the theoretical framework for the model, which they developed to explain the role of academics during the implementation of new quality polices in some Australian higher education universities that “the model emerged from a review of policy and organisational behaviour literature”. The review is presented in the article, covering various perspectives on ‘what impact resources, accountability, organisational culture and leadership’ may have on the responses of academics to policy changes with respect to quality practices. However, in their discussion the researchers do not make it clear what theoretical position underlies their arguments. As a result, when it comes to answering the question how theoretically grounded the researchers arguments are in the articles with a theoretically-wide approach, it is difficult to give a direct answer. One of the difficulties that arise here is related to the question of whether such a wide spectrum of theoretical dimensions can be considered as a proper theoretical basis for the researchers to develop their arguments on. If the answer is positive, then on the basis of which of the theoretical dimensions presented in the articles do they build their further assumptions about the discussed issues? This is another difficulty that prevents from answering the research sub-question put in this section. When the researchers build their discussions around such a variety of theoretical perspectives, a lack of main and clear theoretical position advocated by them can be experienced while reading the articles. This interferes with establishing connections between a theoretical part and researchers’ arguments, i.e. finding theoretical rationales behind the assumptions, which the researchers made when discussing institutional quality management practices. Moreover, it seems that in some articles the assumptions are mainly based on researchers’ previous practical
experiences, and the use of references to various sources of information is only a means of illustration of their views on the issues. For example, when arguing about the importance of ‘the development of culture of quality in higher education institutions’, Strydom et al. (2004: 213) look into different sources of resistance to change and generate some strategies for effective change management and implementation of quality assurance.

According to the authors (Strydom et al., 2004: 213), the strategies were developed on the basis of ‘integrated perspectives from organisational psychology, higher education and quality assurance literature’. However, since there is no explanation given about what theories or concepts lie behind the mentioned ‘perspectives’, it remains unclear to what extent the strategies suggested by the researchers, as well as their arguments about the importance of ‘effective change management’ within higher education institutions are theoretically-grounded. In the article written by Duening and Kadipasaoglu (1996:57-64), in which they claim that teamwork as one of the quality management techniques can contribute to continuous improvement of educational quality, the arguments are based on the results of the Process-improvement Team Process carried out as a quality improvement effort at the University of Houston. As Duening and Kadipasaoglu (1996: 63) notice themselves, “based on this case example, it is clear that the team approach to organisational problem solving can be as effective in higher education as it has been in other industries”. During the discussion the researchers also use single references to different researchers on sociology, psychology and higher education, such as Heidegger (1962), Handy (1994), Senge (1990), Seymour (1992) and some others.

Theoretically-narrow approach

When it comes to the articles belonging to the second group (i.e. theoretically-narrow) (e.g. the articles by Bolander et al., 2006; Minelli et al., 2006; Watty, 2006; Weusthof, 1995) here the researchers build a theoretical framework on the basis of one or two interrelated theories which they use as a theoretical rationale for the construction of models and hypotheses to carry out their empirical studies. It should also be mentioned that the researchers, whose articles can be characterised as theoretically-narrow, focus on tackling quality issues by elaborating a clear theoretical position headed for one direction, i.e. deep into the discussed issue rather than basing their arguments on theoretical data derived from various sources, i.e. making a theoretical perspective wider, as in the case of the articles belonging to the first group. Such an approach for building a theoretical basis seems to lead to a better and easier understanding of the researchers’ line of thinking, since the theoretical part is well-defined
and structured. The article, in which Weusthof (1995: 235-248) analyses the results of internal quality assurance carried out in Dutch Universities in 1994 and how these evaluation results were used at faculty level, as well as what factors could possibly influence the internal quality assurance in faculties, can be taken as an example. Stressing the importance of ‘a sound self-evaluation under full faculty responsibility… as the best guarantee for quality maintenance and improvement in that faculty’, Weusthof (1995: 247) bases his arguments on two theories, i.e. systems theory and contingency theory, and the empirical findings obtained during the research. The theories presented in the article constitute one part of a theoretical framework developed by the researcher to establish a sound theoretical basis for his empirical research. Here the researcher provides readers with an explanation of the relationship between faculties (i.e. their characteristics and members) and the way the internal quality assurance was organized, by covering the main theoretical assumptions derived from the theories. The framework also includes a theoretical model together with several hypotheses constructed on the basis of the formulated assumptions from the systems and contingency theories. The theoretical position presented in the article is clear, well-organised and in line with the empirical results. Thus, it can be stated that the researcher’s arguments about the necessity of ‘stimulation of the improvement of internal quality assessment procedures’, as well as the whole discussion of the issue, in general, are well-theoretically grounded. Another example of a theoretically-narrow approach to building a framework for studying some phenomena with respect to internal quality management is an article written by Minelli et al. To discuss the impact of research and education evaluation on two universities: one in Italy and one in the Netherlands, Minelli et al. (2006: 109-123) adopt a system approach to evaluation and suggest a model to describe and analyse evaluation systems. According to the model, ‘evaluation as a formal system, may take different shapes. These shapes are determined by the four elements of the system: the idea or concept of assessment, the applied methods, the bodies in charge of evaluation and the way assessment is used. The joint action of these elements, characterized by some level of coherence, brings about the institutional and organisational impact of evaluation’ (Minelli et al., 2006: 110). The employment of the model and elements developed on the basis of a system approach as a research tool allows, therefore, the authors of the article to provide readers with theoretically well-substantiated arguments, as well as the results of the analysis.
Empirical findings – based approach

During the research analysis another group of the articles was differentiated as well (see the articles by Coyle, 2003; Leckey and Neill, 2001; Harris and Bretag, 2003; Alean-Kirkpatrick et al., 1997; Rosa et al., 2006). These are the cases where only the researchers’ empirical findings are introduced, without any explanation of what theories or concepts they were based on. For example, in the article by Alean-Kirkpatrick et al. (1997: 63-71) the emphasis is mainly on the presentation of a model designed and implemented by the Centre for Teaching and Learning at ETH Zurich to assist at a regular assessment of the teaching and learning at the institute. Whereas in their article about institutional consequences of quality assessment, Rosa et al. (2006: 145-159) analyse the opinions of Portuguese university rectors and academics on the quality assessment system and its consequences at the institutional level. Harris and Bretag (2003: 179-185) describe the process used in an undergraduate management ethics course at the University of South Australia, which resulted in an increased emphasis on collaborative teaching and assisted at the improvement of quality of student learning outcomes. As it can be seen from the examples, the articles are focused on the introduction of some models or surveys designed and implemented by various either national or institutional bodies. Here the researchers only outline the details of models or surveys and describe examples of the implementation results and their impact on quality within institutions, without analyzing them critically or giving their opinion on the cases described. Even if the word ‘analysis’ is present in sub-headings of some of the articles, the analysis itself is limited by a description of how methodologically the discussed processes were carried out.

Alean- Kirkpatrick et al. (1997: 64-66) provides readers with quite a detailed description of ‘model design’ and then of what impacts it had on different levels of the institution, accompanying it by statistical figures. Rosa et al. (2006) concentrate a lot on presenting the respondents’ opinions on various aspects covered in the survey and comparing them with each other, illustrating it by the means of percentage correlation. It seems like the articles are about mere presentation of data concerning the implementation of models or surveys, and remind of reports on the research results but with insufficient critical perspective expressed by the researchers themselves. Moreover, the approach which the researchers use to discuss quality issues in these articles, appears to be more ‘descriptive’ rather than ‘analytical’. Thus, when it comes to the question of how theoretically grounded the researchers’ arguments are, the answer is as difficult to find as in the case of the articles with a theoretically- narrow approach discussed above. Whereas in the first group (i.e. with a theoretically-narrow approach), the
problem is related to the lack of a clearly-defined theoretical basis for the arguments and discussions provided, in this group of the articles, the difficulty lies in the lack of analytical discussions and arguments themselves, since the researchers’ main focus is on the presentation of their empirical findings.

All in all, from the discussion above it is seen that in most cases, when the researchers discuss institutional quality management, their arguments are either based on a review of various theoretical perspectives or they are reduced to the description and analysis of the empirical findings. There can be several reasons for this. First, since this research is based on the analysis of empirical studies, and the authors of the articles are mainly practitioners rather than theorists, they may have a lack of theoretical knowledge with respect to the field of higher education or necessary research skills for creating a proper theoretical basis for their arguments. Secondly, having participated in institutional quality management practices themselves and experienced the difficulties higher education institutions face during the implementation of those, the researchers show more interest in discussing the empirical results they have obtained than explaining the theoretical rationales behind their statements and, therefore, underestimate the importance of theoretical knowledge in educational quality development and enhancement.

4.3 What criteria do they stress while analyzing the approaches?

When discussing the approaches, the researchers emphasise a certain number of criteria (or elements) which from their point of view can contribute to support and development of institutional quality values. The analysis of the articles shows that there is no much variance in the criteria stressed by different researchers within each approach.

‘Academic’ approach: criteria
When the focus is on ‘academic’ quality values, most of the researchers highlight the importance of development and improvement of programmes and curricular. In their article about the role of the core curriculum in medical education, Bolander et al. (2006: 41-45) argue that the development of educational programmes (or core curriculum) requires a better understanding of relationship between the learning outcomes expressed in the programmes (curriculum) and their interpretation by teachers, and whether the outcomes coincide with teachers’ teaching goals. The researchers state that looking into these relationships can assist
at a better and more coherent design of programmes and curricular, which will have a positive impact on educational quality. Hansen and Jackson (1996: 211-217) also support the idea that, besides some other activities, the improvement of quality, or ‘total quality improvement’ (as he refers to it in his article) requires detailed planning, preparation and cohesion between different parts of the educational course/programme.

It should be mentioned that design of curriculum has also been identified as one of the important factors in investigating the extent to which institutional quality monitoring improves and enhances student learning (Horsburgh, 1998). From this point of view, curricula should:

- ‘include opportunity for the development of a wide range of attributes which will allow graduates to fit into a changing world’;
- ‘clearly define programme aims and learning outcomes in order to facilitate a student-centered approach’;
- ‘empower students with flexible curricula, which allow choice and student input into programmes and learning’;

‘Managerial’ approach: criteria

‘Managerial’ quality values are usually addressed by the means of reinforcement of institutional leadership, teamwork of all the participants of the institutional activities (academics, students, administrative staff and potential employers), and efficient management of resources. For example, when Srikanthan and Dalrymple discuss the dilemmas that higher education institutions face nowadays (i.e. enhancement of student learning and yet meeting the criteria for access; or the reduction of expenses and at the same time, increase in student number; academic freedom and yet being accountable to the government and the society), they see a solution in “team involvement and team learning, which starts with dialogue, the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into genuine thinking together” (Senge et al., 1994: 15-47 quoted in Srikanthan and Dalrymple 2005: 72).

Horsburgh (1998: 115), in her turn, stresses the importance of teachers’ teamwork, stating that ‘institutions intending to focus internal quality monitoring on transformation have to emphasise self-regulation and innovation, in particular by the means of delegating responsibility for quality to teaching teams and accommodating improvement processes’.

Teamwork (or staff collaboration) is seen as an important factor which can contribute to an effective implementation of a quality agenda within institutions. “The involvement of staff
from the beginning of the quality endeavour increases the chances of success and helps institutions to develop appropriate instruments for assessing quality” (Strydom et al. 2004: 214). In almost all of the articles, the crucial role in the development and improvement of internal quality management systems is also given to leadership of senior management. According to Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2005: 76), ‘none of the developments can be successfully introduced without the foresight and commitment of senior staff members. Their leadership will require a capacity to effectively translate the realities of the external world into the inner life of the institution’. Moreover, it is suggested that leadership with respect to higher education should not be concentrated in the hands of one person, but ‘to be distributed and democratic, stretched over the practice of the actors within an organisation’ (Srikanthan and Dalrymple 2005: 76). Other criteria which the researchers often mention in the articles when stressing ‘managerial’ approach is management of all types of resources which higher education institutions have in their disposal. Barrow (1999: 30) refers to ‘financial, administrative and physical resources’ as one of the eight elements that must be targeted by the Quality-management Systems of institutions in New Zealand in their pursuit for educational quality. In his article about institutional consequences of quality assessment carried out in Portuguese universities, Rosa et al. (2006: 156) are interested in the rectors and coordinators’ views on how to support ‘good practice in their institutions’. Among several suggestions made by them, the rectors and academics emphasise ‘the promotion of more efficient use of resources and the marketing of programmes’.

‘Pedagogic’ approach: criteria

The criteria which the researchers stress while analyzing a ‘pedagogic’ approach, include professional development and training of staff (both academic and administrative), the improvement or enhancement of teaching and learning skills and methods, the creation of a total learning environment for students. The view on how student learning outcomes can be increased expressed by Harris and Bretag (2003) may serve as an example of researchers advocating the criteria related to the improvement of teaching/learning skills and strategies, as well as appropriate learning environment for students. In their article, the authors (2003: 179-185) promote the use of ‘reflective and collaborative teaching practice’ as a means of enhancing student learning outcomes. According to Harris and Bretag (2003: 181-183), the ‘reflective and collaborative teaching process’ should focus on several elements:

- ‘encouraging student engagement’ through the use of contemporary learning materials and letting students participate in their preparation;
‘developing students’ communication skills’ through the introduction of a debate and teamwork;

‘using new technologies to enhance learning’ by the means of online facilities’;

‘encouraging reflective and critical thinking’ by asking students to keep a reflective journal of learning, and teachers – a journal of teaching and learning issues to facilitate an educational process.

Although the application of this type of teaching practice is suggested with respect to the international management ethics and values course run at the University of South Australia, the importance of the development of the elements composing the process is often, to certain degree, highlighted by other researchers on quality in higher education. For example, Horsburgh (1998: 127-130) also notices that the focus of learning processes should:

‘be on student learning and the development of metacognition’;
‘encourage deep learning’;
‘see students as participants in the learning process’;
‘empower students through the development of their critical ability’.

Teaching is required to be ‘innovative and incorporate a variety of approaches’; ‘be student-centered and involve appraisal systems which focus on improvement of learning and teaching’ (Horsburgh 1998: 129). Furthermore, teachers should ‘have opportunities to engage in shared reflective practice and discuss pedagogical issues, and have the opportunity for professional development that allows for transformative learning’ (Horsburgh 1998: 129).

‘Employment focus’ approach: criteria

With the emphasis on ‘employment focus’ values, the researchers emphasise such criteria as measuring, evaluation and satisfaction of both students and employers’ needs and requirements. In the articles there is a debate about ensuring customers delight, making their needs a matter of priority for higher education institutions (Popli, 2005; Coyle, 2003; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2005). Nowadays higher education institutions are pulled in different directions by the competing desires of various customers. However, the analysis shows that many researchers express the idea that the main customers should still be students and employers. Their satisfaction is seen as the best measure of quality (Popli, 2005). An institute can delight a customer only if they know what the customer expectations are. The researchers suggest various methods to determine whether an institute is exceeding expectations. For example, based on his own empirical research, Popli (2005: 17-24) advocates the employment of a satisfaction survey. The researcher states that a survey can
assist at examining student satisfaction/dissatisfaction with specific aspects of educational provision, and then translating students’ needs into appropriate curriculum, teaching/learning methods and the institutional infrastructure. Coyle (2003: 199-205) describes the experience of implementation of a ‘customer-centered model’ at one of the universities in the UK. In the model, the needs of customers are put in the forefront of planning and delivery. Academics and library staff are seen as of primary importance and responsible for provision of learning opportunities and support services to students. The departments are required to collect and respond to student feedback in order to evaluate student satisfaction and respond to their needs. When it comes to employers’ satisfaction, Horsburgh (1998) argues about the need for universities to produce graduates with certain attributes required by potential employers. The researcher (1998: 131) states that “they (the employers) want graduates who will have the higher-level academic abilities of analysis, synthesis and critique, and who are also adaptable, flexible, self-motivated and self-assured, and able to interact effectively with others. Additionally, they want graduates who will have transformative attributes, which will enable them to innovate, inspire others, anticipate and lead changes”. Thus, in the researchers’ opinion, if higher education institutions are seeking to be more accountable, effective and competitive, the focus of their quality management systems has to be laid on ‘employment focus’ values.

4.4 What is the researchers’ role during the analysis?

According to the research study, it can be stated that the role of the researchers during the analysis depends on the goal they aim to achieve when discussing institutional quality management. In this case, the articles can be divided into two groups:

- first, those in which the researchers aim at introducing and analysing the empirical findings obtained during various quality management processes, in which they may or may not have participated;
- second, the articles, in which the researchers’ main objective is to develop appropriate tools, which are usually presented in the form of some models or approaches, in order to give people the necessary resources for institutional quality enhancement.

When it comes to the role the researchers play in each of the groups, it can be defined as the following: in the first category, the researchers are as analytical informants on institutional quality management processes;
in the second group, the researchers can be considered as being *developers of quality-enhancing tools* with respect to higher education institutions’ quality management systems.

**Researchers’ Role as Analytical Informants**

What is meant here by the researchers’ role as *analytical informants* is that after either having participated in or just having observed certain processes of institutional quality management, the researchers report on the results, discuss them and draw conclusions from their critical perspective, as well as offer their recommendations. As a result, this may provide those who are involved in the quality assurance, and those who are interested in its positive outcomes (i.e. higher education stakeholders) with the necessary information and keep them updated on the changes taking place within institutional quality systems so that they can react in a certain way and develop their own strategic actions for educational quality improvement. As Watty (2006: 293) notices in his article: “A primary aim of this research is to provide findings that are not only of interest to, but attract the attention of, administrators and policy-makers”.

The articles, in which the researchers play a role of analytical informants, can be characterized by a ‘neutral’- in- researchers’- attitude- to- the- subject main body and a more-involved-concluding part. When one looks into the main body of the articles, one can see that many of the researchers mainly concentrate on either a presentation of some empirical studies and their results or examination of such. For example, when reading about the objective of the articles, one can often come across such statements as ‘this article reports on a study…’ or ‘this paper examines/analyses…’ (Anderson 2006: 161; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005: 135; Duening & Kadipasaoglu, 1996: 57; Popli, 2005: 17; Rosa et al., 2006: 145; Ottewill & Macfarlane, 2004: 231). The expression of personal views or preferences is avoided here. This kind of non-interference or ‘neutrality’ position might be explained by the fact that the researchers see their main goal in presenting the results of the empirical studies and letting the readers draw their own conclusions first, before giving their final remarks on the subject discussed. During the research it has been noticed that the way the final remarks are expressed can be different from one article to another. In some articles the researchers draw conclusions by giving a short a summary of the subject discussed and at the same time showing their perspective on it, as for example, Lomas and Nicholls (2005: 146) do in their article when examining the introduction of peer review of teaching in a pre-1992 university in England. In the conclusion the authors of the article summarize briefly the idea of the case study used to illustrate main concepts and issues related to peer review of teaching and then
make some inferences concerning the benefits of peer review as a tool for quality enhancement and under what conditions it could be achieved.

There are also articles in which the researchers express their final remarks in a form of recommendations on how quality situations can be improved. In their article, Duening and Kadipasaoglu (1996) discuss the importance of a team approach as a key to effective organisational management and continuous quality improvement. The conclusions are focused on clear and brief recommendations, which in their opinion, are likely to lead to the successful team approach (Duening and Kadipasaoglu, 1996: 63).

By looking at the concluding part of the articles, in which the authors’ recommendations and remarks are presented, one can grasp what position they take with respect to the raised issues. For example, the main body of the article written by Rosa et al. (2006) is focused on informing readers on the results of a project aimed at analysing the opinions of Portuguese university rectors and academics on the quality assessment system and its consequences at the institutional level. It consists of the presentation of the research methodology and the data obtained during the questionnaire and shows very few signs of the researchers’ attitude to the subject. Whereas in the concluding part of the article, when drawing some conclusions, the researchers, finally, express their critical view on the consequences of institutional quality assessment, suggesting that “new universities in Portugal have been more adaptable to the environment than traditional universities, the former having in general a more positive view of the quality assessment system and its consequences, while new universities have been more diligent in implementing new structures for quality management, in adopting diverse quality management approaches and in providing examples of good practice” (Rosa et al. 2006: 158).

The choice of words the researchers use in this statement, such as ‘more adaptable’ or ‘examples of good practice’ shows their views and attitude to the practices of quality assessment system and its consequences for the universities in Portugal. It looks like the researchers are more positive about the outcomes of the quality management processes taking place within new universities than classical ones.

The article written by Popli (2005) can serve as another example of the researchers being analytical informants when they discuss institutional quality management.

According to Popli (2005: 17), his article about ‘a quality approach to excellence in management education’ has two main objectives: first, ‘to present the results of the study which was carried out among students of management in the national capital region of India… in order to measure the level of customer satisfaction in a cross-section of students’;
second, ‘to recommend the areas that require improvement to better cater to student needs’. The first part of the article, i.e. its main body, introduces the readers into the basic aspects of the notion ‘customer satisfaction’ and the tools for measuring it, referring to the Centre for Research into Quality at the University of Central England in Birmingham as “one of the most noteworthy amongst the institutions specializing in this area”. In this part, Popli (2005: 21-22) also informs the readers on the methodology and the results of the study itself, and when doing this the researcher shows very little personal involvement in the discussion except the presentation of data. When it comes to the second part of the article, i.e. a concluding part, Popli (2005: 22-23) states his position by the means of recommendations he provides to those interested or involved in enhancing quality in management education. To understand that the researcher is personally or emotionally involved in the process and that he cares about the outcomes, one needs to look at the last three paragraphs of the concluding part, in which almost every sentence contains the verb ‘should’, regarding either academia or students or industry.

There are some other articles in which it is possible to observe the researchers playing a role of analytical informants. These are the following: the articles written by Anderson (2006), by Lomas and Nicholls (2005), by Ottewill and Macfarlane (2004), by Harris and Bretag (2003), by Horsburgh (1998), by Duening and Kadipasaoglu (1996).

Researchers’ Role as Developers of Quality-Enhancing Tools

When discussing quality management in higher education institutions, there are some researchers who see their role in this process as those who could facilitate the improvement and enhancement of educational and research activities in higher education sector by the means of developing and proposing some tools. These tools are sometimes based on the findings the researchers either have obtained themselves during their empirical research, as in the case of ‘the implementation model’ proposed by Brunetto and Farr-Wharton (2005), or during the analysis of the theoretical and empirical works done by the others, for example, ‘a holistic model for quality in higher education’ developed by Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2005).

According to Brunetto and Farr-Wharton (2005: 161), “a new implementation model bases implementation outcomes on the responses of academics to a new policy”. The model was originally built on a review of policy and organisational behaviour literature. The basic assumption of the implementation model is that ‘successful implementation of a quality agenda strongly depends on the responses of employees working within the organization…’
and that ‘…there are internal (organisational culture and leadership) and external (resources and external accountability) factors which influence the responses of professional employees to new policies’ (Brunetto and Farr-Wharton, 2005: 166). During the implementation of reforms intended to change the work practices of academics in the Australian higher education institutions the model was tested and revised in accordance with new findings. The other external factors which are included in the model now are ‘government policy makers and market forces’. In the revised model the researchers also underline “the role of management in mediating the way academics respond to the new policy” (Brunetto and Farr-Wharton, 2005: 176). From the researchers’ point of view, ‘an important role in determining the success of the implementation process is played by professional managers, not only because of the impact of their response to the policy, but also because of their influence on the responses of colleagues to the new policy’ (Brunetto and Farr-Wharton, 2005: 178).

Therefore, by the means of the implementation model Brunetto and Farr-Wharton attempt to look into the interrelations between various factors and the actors of higher education institutions during quality processes, understanding of which may contribute to quality improvement and enhancement. Moreover, this model can be used by other researchers in further studies on quality implementation processes within institutions.

Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2005: 71) also attempt ‘to synthesize a holistic model for quality in higher education by integrating service and educational quality models, and to implement it with the spirit of the principles of learning communities…’, which, in their mind, ‘…should begin to provide a balanced approach among the ideals of the educational, service and behavioural excellence ethos in higher education’. Unlike Brunetto and Farr-Wharton’s implementation model, a holistic model suggested by Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2005) has not been tested by the researchers themselves in practice, but “the fundamental principles of the holistic model represent bodies of actionable knowledge consisting of underlying theories and practical tools and methods derived from these theories” (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2005: 76). For example, the researchers use Bowden and Marton’s (1998) theory that learning occurs as a result of a dynamic interaction between ways of ‘seeing’ (variation) and ‘discrimination’ (discernment), which, they claim, require a variety of methods of teaching and assessment, as well as tools to divide the knowledge and investigate its nature (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2005: 77). The holistic model also employs the engagement theory of programme quality of Haworth and Conrad (1997), the global features of transformative learning by Harvey and Knight (1996) and Senge et al.’s (1994) generic model for learning organizations (cited from Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2005: 77). Along with the holistic
model, some infrastructural mechanisms, which are required for a successful implementation of the model within an institution, are also introduced. It allows to set in motion a learning cycle to progress towards the desired institutional setting and culture of educational quality.

When it comes to the degree of the researchers’ personal involvement in the subjects discussed in the articles of the second group, it is higher than in the articles of the first group. One of the possible explanations for this may lie in the very role the researchers play during the discussion, i.e. to identify tools or mechanisms of quality enhancement. From the beginning of the discussions presented in the articles one can see the researchers’ interest and aspiration to prove the importance and usefulness of the tools they propose. For example, in the introduction section of their article, Brunetto and Farr-Wharton state that although there is a wide range of theories about the practices of actors and the processes involved, policy-makers have come across unsuccessful implementation of some policies. The researchers go on arguing that there is a need to obtain a better understanding of the employees’ responses during the implementation process. A new implementation model they propose is seen as a possible solution, as it explains the role of academics during the implementation of new policies and can be useful for public sector management practices in their attempts to increase efficiency and effectiveness when having limited public funding (Brunetto and Farr-Wharton, 2005:162). Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2005: 69-70) claim that a development of a holistic model as a synthesis of the features of different models in literature would allow to address both educational processes and service areas within higher education institutions at the same time, which is likely to lead to quality enhancement.
Chapter 5. What Characterizes Research-Based Approaches to and Analysis of Institutional Quality Management?

Looking back at the discussion and the results of this study, it is time to summarize what the characteristics of the approaches and analysis, which have been presented here, may say about quality assurance and quality management of higher education.

First of all, the approaches to quality management can be regarded as being quite heterogeneous when one looks at the variety of values, views on what quality in higher education is and should be, a wide spectrum of theoretical and empirical knowledge and scientific methods involved in tackling quality issues. Secondly, more research has been undertaken in the last few years, which can be explained both by some external and internal factors. These are the following:

- **external**: recently changed political and economic context of many countries which has led to decentralization of the higher education sector in some countries and the strengthening of state control over higher education institutions in the others; reduced funding of the higher education institutions; the appearance and development of private higher education institutions, especially in Eastern European countries; the establishment of new both national and international quality assurance agencies; the Bologna Declaration, etc.

- **internal**: the end of the implementation period of the first national quality assurance schemes developed and implemented in higher education institutions of some countries in the 1980s and 1990s; increase in students’ enrollment; raised quality awareness among students, academics and administrative staff in institutions, etc.

All this have given rise to a lot of research and analysis of the processes taking place within higher education institutions.

Thirdly, although according to this study, there are about as many theoretically- as the empirically-based approaches, most of the researchers’ inclination to focus more on just presentation and discussion of the research findings and data than development of theories and concepts, which would be based on these findings and used as possible quality enhancement tools in the future, as well as some theoretical basis for further research, makes quality assurance and quality management of higher education to a high degree empirical. As it has been mentioned before, despite the existence of some theoretical knowledge developed within the field, the researchers still resort to the help of theories and concepts belonging to the other fields. Moreover, in many of those cases when the theories are used, they seem to be
just window-dressing, without being explained properly and related to the issues discussed in the articles. One of the possible explanations might be that quality assurance and quality management are not developed theoretically.

Doubtlessly, the quality assurance and quality management of higher education are young and developing, and they need time and expertise to build a solid theoretical basis of their own. However, if the researchers who are involved in quality management processes do not develop a coherent theoretical framework in their studies, there is a danger that the field will continue to be fragmented and inconsistent.

In chapter 2, a meta-perspective was developed in order to look into the approaches to quality management the researchers use when addressing quality issues in a higher education institution. The meta-perspective suggests that the researchers’ vision of how quality has to be designed, implemented and maintained in a higher education institution is dependent upon their conceptions about quality in higher education and what ‘quality values’ they advocate in their discussions.

In this chapter the research problem will be answered by the means of the meta-perspective and the results obtained during the research analysis presented in chapter 4.

5.1 The way the approaches and analysis of quality management are substantiated in the research literature: a framework of reference and theoretical/empirical basis

When it comes to a framework of reference used by the researchers in their discourse, the approaches and analysis of quality management can be characterized as being quite inconsistent. To present and substantiate their arguments concerning quality management processes within institutions, the researchers often employ a wide spectrum of means, including quotations and references to both other researchers’ theoretical works, empirical studies and the ones of their own, as well as a variety of official documents and papers. The inconsistency lies in a lack of clearly defined line of arguments, when the references and quotations may comprise a variety of quality agenda issues (e.g. Duening & Kadipasaoglu, 1996; Barrow, 1999).

In their discourse on institutional quality management the researchers resort to theoretical knowledge developed both outside and within the higher education field. The theoretical basis, which the approaches are built on, may include concepts, theories and ideas coming from sociology, psychology, management studies. In the cases when all four approaches to
quality management are addressed, one can often encounter such a phenomenon that all this theoretical knowledge interweaves with each other, making a framework of reference and theoretical basis quite wide and heavy in the sense of the amount of concepts, ideas and theories employed in the articles.

The fact that some researchers in higher education look for the theoretical rationale which could help them to find the answers of how to improve quality and satisfy all the stakeholders’ needs and requirements and by doing so, they go beyond the knowledge obtained within quality of higher education in general, and quality management in particular, also makes the approaches they present cumulative and transparent. The approaches embrace the knowledge which has been accumulated within different social sciences and represents different views on the development of a society and its activities, but at the same time relevant to the field of higher education in general and quality management as one of its aspects, in particular. This leaves quality assurance and quality management open and accessible not only for those who deal with these processes on a daily basis, i.e. initiators and providers (for example, researchers on quality in higher education, higher education policy-makers, administrative staff within higher education institutions, teachers) but also for those who are very much interested in the outcomes of the processes, i.e. receivers (for example, students, employers).

Another point which is worth mentioning is the focus of many of the researchers on the introduction and discussion of the empirical findings obtained during their own research or the one done by their colleagues. Why do they prioritize empirical knowledge to theoretical one? The possible explanations for this were given in section 4.2. It should just be added that such an empirically-oriented approach to the analysis of quality management, as well as the two other approaches mentioned above (i.e. theoretically-wide and theoretically-narrow in sec. 4.2) can to some extent help with understanding of where the field of quality assurance and quality management of higher education stands and what is happening within it now.

Thus, so far the research articles which have been analysed during this study may be characterized in terms of a spectrum. On the one hand, there is, therefore, a substantial amount of writing which seeks to present empirical findings and advise on how higher education institutions might best be managed in today’s circumstances. On the other hand, there are few research articles which are more theorized and analytical, seeking to explain how and why higher education institutions are managed in the ways they are. There is quite a large number of articles lying between these two ends of the spectrum, the articles which
encompass the elements of both, i.e. varied elements of empirical analysis, ‘how to’ guidance and theorized, critical research. When compared to the empirically-oriented ‘how to’ articles, this type of articles (i.e. midway articles) are more visionary in their approach, suggesting that there is a single or best way of managing higher education institutions, which should be followed not just to survive, but also to achieve significant quality improvement. It should also be mentioned that by comparison with both of these types of the articles on the quality management of higher education institutions, the empirically based, more theorized and critical literature on this area is less developed.

5.2 The values underpinning the researchers’ approaches to institutional quality management

The analysis of 20 research articles about institutional quality management, which cover the eleven-year period of publication of the journal Quality in Higher Education, shows that the researchers’ conceptions of quality in particular countries and institutions are heterogeneous and can entail several types of values. In addition, the balance between the types differs.

A large number of researchers employ a holistic approach. They claim that the improvement and enhancement of educational quality within higher education institutions requires addressing all four ‘quality values’, i.e. ‘academic’, ‘pedagogic’, ‘managerial’ and ‘employment focus’.

In his article, Popli (2005: 21) advocates the importance of ‘the holistic development of students’ in India’s business and management schools and institutions, and states that they “have to gear themselves up to improve quality, have to abandon their short-sighted and firefighting approaches and adopt a policy of continuous improvement”. The author (2005: 22-23) suggests that it can be achieved through:

- the improvement of programme/curricular design, making it “more practically oriented than theoretical, and placing more emphasis on analytical skills”;
- the reinforcement of customers’ satisfaction (here students and employers are considered as being the main customers);
- the provision of training-for-job opportunities “for students to be able to perform not only in interviews but also to do justice to their work responsibilities”;
- “benchmarking of best teaching and learning practices at both the national and international level and using this to update curricula”.

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The arguments presented in the article may give an impression that the author emphasizes only ‘managerial’ and ‘employment focus’ quality values, as his expertise is management education which is very much profession-oriented by nature. However, the author does not underestimate the influence of best teaching/learning practices and relevant curriculum development, addressing also in this way ‘pedagogic’ and ‘academic’ values.

Ottewill and Macfarlane (2004: 231) discuss the notion of ‘scholarship of teaching’ and how a quality assessment process can contribute to its primary goal, i.e. ‘to enhance the quality of the student learning experience’ (Prosser and Trigwell, 1999 quoted in Ottewill and Macfarlane 2004: 231). In the article, the researchers identify several ‘pedagogic principles’ underpinning good educational (teaching/learning) practices. It has to be mentioned that not all of the principles discussed in the article are oriented towards pedagogical aspects, such as ‘the use of a wide variety of learning and teaching methods and assessment practices’ (Ottewill and Macfarlane 2004: 236). The ‘pedagogical principles’ called ‘collaboration’, ‘stakeholder involvement’, ‘self-criticism’ highlight the importance of “co-operation between all the various contributors to the student learning experience (for example, information specialists, career advisers, learning technologists)”, of “the involvement of stakeholders (for example, students, employers, professional bodies) in quality management and enhancement”. Thus, in the discussion the researchers’ main target is ‘pedagogic’ quality values. However, from the arguments presented it becomes obvious that to achieve this target there is a need for the involvement of other quality management approaches, though the balance between the approaches is obviously in favour of a ‘pedagogic’ approach.

When giving their perspective on the internal quality monitoring of teaching at one of the Swiss higher education institutions, Alean-Kirkpatrick et al. also support the idea of embracing all quality values in a concept of educational quality. They point out that the focus of a total quality monitoring process has to be not only on “the didactic quality of teaching… but also on the assessment of the quality of the contents (subject matter) and their appropriateness, as well as other aspects associated with the learning environment such as the organization of lectures and laboratory sessions, the university’s infrastructure and learning outcomes” (Alean-Kirkpatrick et al. 1997: 64). This line of arguments shows that the authors of the article suggest that the quality of teaching can be improved through the application of several quality management approaches, so that all the quality values are addressed simultaneously, i.e. including ‘academic’, ‘pedagogic’, ‘managerial’ and ‘employment focus’ approaches.
The results of this study has shown that, most of the researchers on higher education perceive institutional quality as a holistic concept, according to which the development and enhancement of some aspects of an institutional quality management system entails and depends on the development and enhancement of the others.

However, there is also a small number of researchers who build their approaches to quality management around a combination of two ‘quality values’, considering them as an important factor of quality enhancement. The most common combination is:

- first, of those quality values which are related to professional and structural development within an institution, i.e. ‘managerial’ and ‘pedagogic’ quality values;
- second, of those values which are focused on knowledge acquisition and students’ learning experience and environment, i.e. ‘academic’ and ‘pedagogic’ quality values.

In the first case, the researchers raise the discussions about the implications of the development of quality assurance systems for culture and change within higher education institutions. So, the main topic of the articles here is ‘change’ within an institutional structure, as well as institutional activities, both administrative and educational. The articles are full of such notions as ‘effective change management’, ‘managerialism and marketisation’, ‘cost-effectiveness’, ‘efficiency’, ‘organisational changing culture’, ‘dissemination of best teaching practices’ (Strydom et al., 2004; Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2005; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005). It seems that the researchers see a solution of quality issues by the means of managerial tools, i.e. organizational restructuring, reinforcement of leadership and administration, more efficient management of resources.

As Strydom et al. (2004: 213-214) point out, ‘effective change management’ is a key factor for ‘the successful implementation of quality assurance’. They go on arguing that the establishment of a quality assurance system and culture within an institution requires an ‘effective top management support’, as well as a careful planning of the whole process. Brunetto and Farr-Wharton (2005: 166) advocate a similar position, stressing out an important role that ‘organisational culture’ and ‘leadership’ play during the implementation of quality management procedures. According to the ‘implementation model’ that they developed, organizational culture and leadership are two main internal factors that have an impact on the responses of employees working within an institution to the implementation of quality management procedures, in particular the academics’ responses. The academics are seen as those who create a resistance to the implementation of new quality agendas. When suggesting
the application of ‘managerial’ and ‘pedagogic’ approaches in combination, the researchers, therefore, attempt to tackle the ‘academics’ resistance’ issue and build a bridge between traditional core educational activities, i.e. teaching, learning, research and new managerial practices. That’s why the emphasis lies on the importance of such criteria as ‘leadership’ and ‘organizational culture’. Strydom et al. (2004: 214) notice that “change in core activities like teaching and research inevitably generates a need for parallel enhancements in administrative and other support systems”.

When it comes to change in teaching, learning and research, the researchers want to see more ‘collaboration amongst academic staff in order to share ideas and good practice’ (Lomas & Nicholls, 2005: 139). Strydom et al. (2004: 214) argue that the recognition of examples of good practice with respect to teaching/learning and research within the institutions and also comparing them with international practices can lead to effective facilitation and support of the development of institutional quality processes.

In the second case, the researchers see quality, first of all, as students’ transformation during the teaching and learning processes (Harris & Bretag, 2003; Watty, 2006; Hansen & Jackson, 1996; Knight, 2006). The main objective expressed in their articles is how to enhance students’ learning experience and to promote their learning outcomes. To achieve this objective, the authors of the articles advocate the use of the approaches which are based on ‘pedagogic’ and ‘academic’ quality values. For example, in his article about quality in accounting education in Australian universities, Watty (2006: 298) suggests that “quality in accounting education ought to be about transformation, defined…as: a unique, individually negotiated process between the teacher and the learner, where the participant is transformed”. Hansen and Jackson (1996: 211) also point at the need for ‘total quality improvement in the classroom’ explaining that if one talks about improving quality in an institution, one should begin with ‘the core activities of universities-teaching/learning- as they remain largely untouched’. As he goes on, “yet it is the knowledge and skill students gain that equip them to live well, contribute to society, and perform effectively in the labour market” (Hansen and Jackson,1996: 211). The researchers’ views on how students’ learning experience can be improved include: first of all, supporting ‘educational professional development of staff’ in order ‘to shape the professional formation of those who teach and support student learning’ (Knight 2006: 31); second, ‘student involvement in the learning process, represented by team research projects to create knowledge; third, ‘continuous improvement of teaching/learning by the means of evaluations of the course and teaching carried out by students’ (Hansen and
Jackson, 1996: 211); forth, ‘improvement of core curriculum in the way that curriculum learning outcomes become more coherent with teachers’ teaching goals’ (Bolander et al. 2006: 42).

It is difficult to explain the rationale behind the researchers’ choice of such a combination of ‘quality values’ as ‘managerial’ and ‘pedagogic’ or ‘academic’ and ‘pedagogic’. In the case of ‘managerial/pedagogic’ combination, one of the possible reasons for this can be that the researchers were making a contribution to a very popular debate on quality and quality assurance in higher education taking place in the beginning of 2000 and some years after that. The articles were written in 2004-2005, the time-period when higher education institutions were facing the results of the implementation of quality assurance systems, as well as the results of adopting managerial principles and methods of running organizational activities from the industry in order to support internal quality systems.

The main discussions in the literature of that time were about, first, the revision of purposes of quality assurance systems, including improvement of current practices, meeting demands for public accountability and optimizing the use of resources; second, suitability of primary managerial procedures or methods used by quality assurance systems to enhance quality within institutions; third, impact of the quality assurance procedures on the quality of institutional activities and organizational culture. ‘Managerial’ and ‘pedagogic’ quality values were, therefore, put in the forefront of the discussions. They were seen as key values which would lead institutions to success among all the stakeholders of higher education, allowing higher education institutions to be both accountable and improvement-oriented.

As far as the authors of the articles, focusing on ‘academic’ and ‘pedagogic’ quality values, are concerned, they might belong to those researchers for whom the most important activities of a higher education institution are teaching, learning and research; that’s why all the mechanisms within an institution should be directed into their maintenance, improvement and enhancement.

When it comes to an ‘employment focus’ quality value, this study has shown that in most cases it is advocated only in combination with other quality values, i.e. as one of the elements of a holistic approach to institutional quality management. It suggests that none of the researchers relates the problem of educational quality primarily to graduate standards and learning outcomes (i.e. employment focus), but most researchers rather understand quality issues as managerial, academic and pedagogic. It seems that when looking for the ways of tackling quality issues, the researchers focus their attention a great deal on the effect of institutional input and throughput on the quality of educational activities and services.
produced. However, the focus of quality management in higher education should not only be on the relationship between higher education institutions and their sources (input side) but also on the relationship between academic organizations and their stakeholders (output side) (Dill, 1995). Although many of the mechanisms proposed by the researchers for regulating quality in higher education institutions (throughput) have been shaped by the information of various study results, service activities and satisfaction of stakeholders, student satisfaction with courses and student/employer satisfaction with degree programmes still require more attention and research.

Thus, the research findings have revealed that when discussing quality and institutional quality management, the researchers have different views on educational quality, as well as what the institutional quality management systems have to focus upon in their pursuit for quality enhancement. Such heterogeneity in approaches, along with inconsistency and fragmentariness of a theoretical framework and a framework of reference employed by the researchers in their analysis show that institutional quality management cannot be characterized as a coherent theoretical field and with an integrated conceptual basis.

So far institutional quality management appears to be very empirically-oriented and represented by practitioners mostly. Doubtlessly, the empirical knowledge is important and necessary for the improvement of educational quality. However, to secure continuous progress of this process, quality management of higher education should be more theoretical, more cumulative and research-intensive.

5.3 The processes concerning how the improvement should take place

Despite the fact that the researchers have diverse perspectives on what quality in a higher education institution is and the approaches to institutional quality management they choose vary from each other, the actions, which the researchers suggest, on what has to be done in order to design, implement, maintain and improve quality in a higher education institution are quite similar to each other. According to the research analysis (see sec. 4.3), the researchers tend to emphasise almost the same criteria, i.e. the criteria which would correspond to three main points the researchers seem to build their discussions around. These are students’ learning, interactive activities around it and management tools to support and enhance the quality of the educational activities in higher education institutions. From this perspective, the approaches can, therefore, be regarded as being homogeneous. For example, when the
researchers discuss the importance of the improvement and enhancement of student learning, the means of achieving it suggested by them often include:

- detailed planning, preparation and cohesion between different parts of the educational programmes/courses, flexible curricular, clearly defined programme aims and learning outcomes, in other words, the criteria defined earlier as design of programme and design of curriculum (e.g. Horsburgh, 1998; Hansen & Jackson, 1996; Alean-Kirkpatrick et al., 1997; Bolander et al., 2006);
- development of students’ learning and communication skills, their critical abilities, the involvement of students in knowledge creation, professional development and training of teaching staff, the improvement of teaching methods, the employment of various teaching and learning styles, a teacher-student cooperation in the learning process – such criteria as teaching/learning skills and methods, staff training and development, students’ learning environment (e.g. Harris & Bretag, 2003; Horsburgh, 1998; Ottewill & Macfarlane, 2004; Knight, 2006).

When it comes to interactive activities around students’ learning, the researchers point to the necessity of:

- staff selection and appraisal, provision of professional training for students, development of indicators of possibilities of students’ employment, collaboration of higher education institutions with potential employers and communities - all these can be summarized by the criteria employers’ needs and requirements, students’ needs and employment opportunities (e.g. Barrow, 1999; Alean-Kirkpatrick et al., 1997; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2005; Popli, 2005; Rosa et al., 2006).

Among a variety of existing management tools, the most frequently mentioned are:

- the development of mission statements and policies of an institution, the improvement of organisational culture, the development of leadership skills among the academics, the use of resource management and a supporting quality information system, the encouragement of effective communication between higher education stakeholders both within an institution and outside, which can be embraced in such criteria as leadership, teamwork, resource management (e.g. Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2005; Duening & Kadipasaoglu, 1996; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Rosa et al., 2006; Strydom et al., 2004).
However, there is no doubt that research on quality assurance and quality management has evolved, and the changing line of discourse presented in the articles reflects it. While in the beginning the attention was mostly given to the emergence, design and implementation of quality assurance systems and institutional quality management systems, in more recent articles, the researchers address the meaning and usefulness of activities taking place within those systems. Furthermore, the impact of evaluations of education has increasingly become one of the central themes in research. At the same time the attention has been shifted from the whole institutional level, to the programme level, and to the individual level. It can also be seen that a number of the articles on the role of individual teachers is growing, along with the researchers’ interest in ‘student feedback questionnaires’ and ‘student ratings’ (e.g. Gosling & D’Andrea, 2001; Coyle, 2003; Popli, 2005). According to the research literature, the student feedback could assist at quality improvement, provision of data for decisions in personnel matters, and keeping stakeholders informed about quality of education.

In the articles, a lot of attention is also given to the general organisational climate in which educational activities take place, and in which academic and administrative staff is stimulated to work on the quality of education. This brings out the issue of the appreciation for education shown by the institution’s management: mechanisms of reward and involvement of academic staff into institutional managerial processes (e.g. Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2005; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Strydom et al., 2004). This does not mean that the researchers ignore the students’ opinions, on the contrary, there are more and more researchers who claim that the optimum approach will be the one which integrates the interests of all the stakeholders (e.g. Alean-Kirkpatrick et al., 1997; Barrow, 1999; Ottewill & Macfarlane, 2004). Such a holistic approach to quality management, according to which all the stakeholders are satisfied and interests are taken into account, may sound very optimistic and encouraging. Nevertheless, it is very difficult to implement due to a multiplicity of functions and responsibilities which higher education institutions have nowadays. On the one hand, higher education institutions are occupied with searching for truth and pursuing of knowledge; on the other hand, they provide different services to society. Besides, another question arising here is how realistic it can be to create a quality management system which would succeed in balancing various values presented within higher education institutions, and synchronizing them with demands and values of the external environment at the same time.

As Salter and Tapper (1994) notice, quality debate can be described as ‘ideological struggle between the economic view of the purposes of higher education, the traditional liberal idea, and the bureaucratic drive of the state … in framing educational policy’ (cited in Greatrix
Moreover, it must be recognized that quality activities themselves are not so simple and straightforward as they may seem. According to Vught (1994), they are:

- as elusive as pervasive;
- self-contradictory (Pirsig 1974);
- political: linked to far-reaching government policies;
- sensitive: requiring a look at strengths and weaknesses;
- multidimensional and subjective: overvaluing measurable indicators.

Each of these factors adds an important element to the quality debate and challenge to the implementation of a holistic quality management approach. First of all, as it has been noticed by others (Harvey & Green 1993; Gordon 2001) ‘quality’ is a seriously ambiguous notion, including a range of possible approaches, and it influences quality activities. Second, quality systems in higher education are dependent on the political system where the higher education activities take place. It does have an impact on quality systems of the higher education institutions, as, for example, different sanctions related to the results of quality assessment procedures, an imposed national curriculum and other possible constraints on academic freedom. Third, taking into consideration strengths and weaknesses of higher education institutions, it has to be admitted that for changes of quality management to be implemented, institutions need to show willingness and to be prepared for that. Finally, different approaches to quality management presented in the research literature are very often dependent on measurable objectives that in its turn may complicate quality improvement further, which is already a complex and multidimensional process.

Thus, under such circumstances, will a holistic approach stand a chance or will it be more reliable and realistic to concentrate on tackling one quality issue at a time?
Chapter 6. Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research

6.1 Main findings

The main aim of this study was to find out what characterizes research-based approaches and analysis of quality management at an institutional level. This was done through the analysis of the research publications presented in the journal *Quality in Higher Education*. The main conclusion of the analysis might be formulated as follows.

Quality assurance and quality management are a popular theme in the discussions about higher education since the 1980s and 1990s, when the first attempts to implement quality management ideas and principles taken from industry in higher education institutions were made. The knowledge and experiences obtained since then have led to a discourse on which quality management approaches can be considered as the most suitable and efficient to achieve quality at its very best in higher education institutions.

This research has suggested that the approaches and analysis of quality management at an institutional level can be characterized as being heterogeneous in terms of how the researchers perceive quality in higher education and what quality values they address in their approaches. On the other hand, one can hardly observe a great variety of methods and techniques of achieving quality suggested in the research literature, as the researchers are inclined to have more or less a common view on a design and maintenance of quality assurance and quality management processes within higher education institutions. In their theoretical basis, most approaches are quite inconsistent and more theoretically-wide than theoretically-narrow, being built on a mixture of various theoretical ideas, principles and concepts.

The study has also found that along with the theoretically-based approaches to quality management, there is quite a large number of approaches and analysis of quality management which are based and build around only empirical findings. In general, it makes the analysis and approaches, which have been presented in the literature by the researchers on institutional quality management practices, more practically-than theoretically-oriented. Such an empirical orientation might be related to the goal the researchers aim to achieve during their discussion, as well as the role they intend to play in it. According to the results of this study, there are more researchers who focus on presentation and analysis of empirical findings (i.e. playing the role of analytical informants), than those who stress the importance of having a
theoretical basis, on which they would be able to develop some tools for the improvement and enhancement of quality (i.e. playing the role of developers of quality-enhancing tools).

Finally, the research has shown that in the research literature, there are some limitations with respect to quality assurance and quality management at an institutional level. First of all, there has not been given a definite answer to the question of what influence institutional quality assurance and quality management practices have on changes/quality improvement and enhancement in education. One of the problems lying here is that quality assurance and quality management usually take place within a constantly changing and developing environment and is closely connected to it. Another problem is that there is no sufficient empirical base to see how quality management influences on the programme and at an individual level within higher education institutions. Thirdly, such a theme as how students view quality and institutional quality management, and what suggestions they have concerning educational quality improvement still needs to be researched and answered.

6.2 Further research and development of the field

As the discourse about quality improvement and enhancement in higher education continues, still more research will be required on quality management practices and approaches. The discussion in this study suggests a number of possible areas of institutional management for further research. These could include:

- comparative studies of management practices in institutions of higher education and other organizations;
- more comparative studies of management practices in higher education institutions in different countries and over time;
- studies of the results of quality management implementation at a study programme level, as well as an individual level;
- research into the alternative management strategies adopted within higher education institutions, particularly in connection with their size, degree of independence from a state, benefits and disbenefits;
- research into the practical usefulness of literatures on how to improve the management of higher education institutions.
Suggestions for Quality Management Improvement

When reflecting back upon the discussion and the research findings presented in this study, I would like to propose my perspective on how quality management in higher education institutions could be improved.

The underlying principle of the approach I suggest is that the emphasis of higher education institutions should be placed on students’ learning in general, the outcomes of this learning and their fitness with employers’ expectations and demands, in particular. The activities which would help with achieving these three targets should include the curricula/programme design, various forms of teacher-student-employer interaction, the assessment of students, the assessment of graduate performance by the employers and through other activities of institutional learning communities. This approach also stresses the importance of a goal-oriented quality management system where a goal system is needed to regulate institutional activities, and it uses information and communication technology to reduce costs. Since the main quality values which are addressed in this approach are ‘employment focus’ and ‘managerial’, there is a need for another important elements here, such as research on customers’ needs and information system of quality. Research on customers’ needs presupposes research on potential employers and institutional alumni, concerning the relevance of knowledge and skills to post-academic success. Information system of quality encompasses measures of the performance of applying students, of accepted students and of graduates, as well as measures of drop-out rates. The information obtained can be used during curriculum/programme design.

The academic leadership is given an important role in measuring and evaluating the institutional and faculty work in order to identify changes to the educational process that can bring about improvement in quality. A greater reflective practice has to be encouraged throughout the whole educational process that would address the expectations of both the institutional quality management system and external quality assurance systems. According to this approach, a higher education institution should use some general and specific quality indicators that inform the leaders on the quality of annual institutional work. However, the results of evaluations should not be linked to any sanctions, but instead be used as the collection of useful data both of successful and not as such practices in order to improve the educational experience and learning outcomes of students. In this approach the judgements should be formative and help with improving learning and at the same time avoiding summative sanctions for areas which still needs improvement.
As D’Andrea and Gosling claim (2005: 178) that “sanctions on their own do not necessarily create the conditions to improve the learning experience of students or bring about needed change”. Academics should be trusted with looking into and evaluating their work and finding ways to improve quality through quality management processes. To accomplish this, they will need solid theoretical knowledge of the processes taking place within quality management of higher education. What can be done to advance quality management theoretically and to bridge the gap between theories and empirical knowledge? Some of the possible solutions might be:

- to encourage researchers on quality management to employ theories in their analysis of current management practices, to present their empirical findings from a theoretical perspective, and to attempt to develop new theories as outcomes of their research and practical experience; it can be initiated by the editorial boards of the journals on higher education, by the research societies, by the senior academics within departments/programmes dealing with quality issues;
- to arrange theoretical courses/seminars on quality assurance and quality management of higher education for those who are involved in these processes, which can be done by higher education research centers;
- to develop theories on higher education that can be tested empirically.

Potentially there is a way to advance both theoretical and empirical knowledge of quality management of higher education, although this requires active participation and cooperation among all the parts involved.

Doubtlessly, quality can take a lot of time and needs an active involvement of all the interested parts. However, changes in many higher education institutions are today highly visible. As Brennan and Shah (2000: 140) state, ‘now these changes can be seen as revolutionary rather than incremental’. They require better understanding and more careful control, if needed. Quality management and assurance processes can assist those involved and interested in them with this, but only if they are open and critical about their purposes, methods and effects. This is what the researchers in higher education quality management are trying to achieve with their studies, as they understand that quality assessment and quality management are about learning and sharing the lessons of that learning.

The discourse on institutional quality management and approaches to it will definitely and should be continued. They are likely to have long-term effects on higher education, and they are also heavily dependent on other factors affecting the field of higher education. Despite the
widespread demands for easy and simple solutions for quality improvement and enhancement within higher education institutions, the approaches and analysis of quality management suggested by various researchers show that it is a very challenging task as quality assurance and quality management of higher education are a very complex business.
Literature


