



Quality assurance in Europe and the U.S.: Professional and political economic framing of higher education policy

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Abstract. In this article we study globalization in terms of the diffusion of quality assurance models and practices between two “core” regions, the U.S. and Europe, as well as within Europe, concentrating particularly on Germany and Austria. We examine the timing of the emergence and diffusion of quality assurance and relatedly of strategic management practices. We then consider the prominence of U.S. models and voices in Europe, addressing the professional and political economic framing of higher education policies. Finally, we explore local variations in the meanings and practices of quality assurance and strategic management. We emphasize the ways in which in these “core” settings, professionals are implicated in the diffusion and adaptation of policies and practices in higher education, even as their activities are shaped by larger structures of global professional and political economies.

Keywords: global professional, policy, political economics, quality assurance, strategic management

Introduction

For all the talk about globalization in higher education, there is limited empirical study of how it happens. What are the professional mechanisms by which similar policies and practices emerge in one country after another? What roles do global economic and educational competition and cooperation play in shaping the discourse surrounding the policies and practices? What adaptations, if any, are made to local contexts in borrowing policies and practices of other countries? We pursue these questions in a study of quality assurance in Austria, Germany, and the United States. We select these countries to provide insight into relations between two “core” geographical arenas and into variations within the regional trading bloc that defines one of them, the European Union. Such sites are generally overlooked in studies of globalization, which tend to examine the influence of “core” countries on “peripheral” ones.

The conceptualization of this article emerged from the operation of professional mechanisms, such as annual conferences of professional associations and the international circulation of professionals. The authors met at one such

conference in the United States (Association for the Study of Higher Education). At another, in Spain (European Association for Institutional Research), we discussed the prominence in Europe of quality assurance, and relatedly of strategic management issues that in the U.S. have been discussed for decades.

One question, then, that drives our analysis is, "*To what extent and through what processes have concepts of quality assurance and strategic management been borrowed from the U. S. and adapted in European higher education?*" Our conceptual frame for addressing this question is institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Meyer and Scott 1983), which identifies professional mechanisms by which systems of organizations become more and more alike – "isomorphic" – in their formal policies and structures. We see this theory as particularly appropriate to the study of relations among industrialized nations, where international channels of normative influence among professionals are likely more significant than mechanisms of economic control such as the World Bank. According to this theory, organizations seek to maintain a fit between their practices and those practices seen as legitimate in terms of prevailing norms and values, the normative environment. Professional processes are a key "normative" mechanism: state of the art practices are disseminated through professional associations, conferences, and journals, and through the circulation of professionals through associations, formal education, and career mobility (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). The state is a "coercive" mechanism through which desirable practices are identified in policy and legislation. Finally, there is a "mimetic" process whereby organizations imitate the practices of organizations perceived to be successful, which in capitalist economies often means private enterprise. We explore these mechanisms in the emergence of quality assurance and strategic management practices in European and U.S. higher education. A key issue is the *timing of these practices' emergence* in various settings.

The construction of this article was facilitated by a particular configuration of economic resources and of global professional and political power relations. Professional mechanisms are supported by and enacted in the context of professional and political economies. Universities underwrite international travel and communication: the authors' conference travels were subsidized; communication afterwards was facilitated by state subsidized e-mail. Moreover, hierarchies within higher education and the global political economy encourage exchange and travel across national boundaries. By virtue of the prominence of the U.S. economy and elite research universities, there is an incentive for an Austrian scholar to work for a year at Stanford and to do research in the U.S. By virtue of those same hierarchies, and the related growing prominence of comparative work, there is European interest in the

work of an Arizona scholar's U.S.-based research, and there is an incentive for that scholar to do comparative work.

Thus, another question that informs our analysis is, "*To what extent do considerations of global economic and educational competition and cooperation feature in and frame the discourse in the U.S. and Europe surrounding quality assurance and strategic management?*" Our conceptual frames for addressing this question are world system theory (Wallerstein 1976) and dependency theory (Altbach and Selvaratnam 1989). Both attend to divisions of labor and differentials among countries in resources, and to patterns of exchange among economies and corporations, educational systems, scholars, and policy makers. World system theory foregrounds the global political economy, positing a division of labor among regions and nations that are in the core, semi-periphery, and periphery, positions defined by the international distribution and flow of economic, political, and military resources and influence. The EU's formation is a strategy within the core to maintain a globally competitive position: the resultant EURO conversion and demand for nations to put their finances in order, put a strain on nations' budgets, contributing to an interest in quality assurance. Models for quality assurance in Europe are influenced by U.S. companies in Europe and their practices (e.g., TQM). So too there is a global professional economy and pattern of stratification in and circulation of intellectual/educational resources that impacts universities. There are professional mechanisms through which state-of-the-art practices circulate globally – associations, conferences, and journals. We consider these in tracking the invocation of models. Another issue, then, a key issue is the *prominence of U.S. models and voices regarding quality assurance and strategic management in Europe.*

Finally, the development of this article combined communication in a common language with adaptation to different cultures and contexts. Our collaboration is made possible by the Austrian author's command of English, now the common professional language in Europe. Yet common language often glosses over differences in what terms mean. Quality assurance in Europe may involve establishing teaching evaluations of academics; in the U.S., where teachers have been evaluated by students for nearly thirty years, quality assurance may refer more to accountability measures focused on productivity. Similarly, strategic management means something different in continental Europe, where university rectors are professors who are elected and who rotate back to the faculty, as compared to the U.S., where presidents are permanent administrators appointed by boards of trustees, and are like corporate CEOs.

Therefore, a third underlying question that guides our analysis is, "*What are the differences and similarities in European adaptations of U.S. mech-*

anisms of quality assurance and strategic management?" Two conceptual frames ground the way that we address this question: comparative work describing variations in professional and political structures across national boundaries (Clark 1983, 1987), and a post-structural view of the significance and power of local spaces that undermine and run counter to overriding trends (Marginson 1997). Comparative research on professors (Neave and Rhoades 1987) and governance identifies fundamental differences between continental Europe and the U.S. European systems are more bottom and top heavy historically (Clark 1983): power rests largely in chaired professors and federal ministries of education. The middle level of institutional management has generally been relatively weak. By contrast, in the U.S. the middle level of institutional management has been quite strong, in contrast to relatively weak bottom (faculty) and top (national and state government) levels of authority. Although in the last two decades more authority in Europe has been devolved to university rectors, and in the U.S. states have exercised increased authority, historical structures still impact the way quality assurance is framed and implemented, and the extent to which strategic management is pursued. Of course, there are also variations on the continent, in the framing of policy (Duina 1999). We also draw on post-structural theories, recognizing that despite powerful international patterns in policy, there are also local variations on and alternatives to these themes (Marginson 1997; Subotzky 1999). Finally, then, a key issue is the particular *terminology and usage of quality assurance and strategic management practices*.

Methods

Our article covers a lot of ground, historically as well as geographically. To achieve this coverage we rely on secondary analysis of the professional literature, review of selected policies and legislation, and content analysis of professional discourse in key international higher education journals and conferences. Our work is exploratory, and selectively systematic, with the analysis concentrating on issues of timing, the prominence of U.S. models and voices, and terminology and adaptation regarding quality assurance and strategic management.

With respect to timing, we explore at what points U.S. and European universities began to adopt these management tools. Here we rely on a review of existing literature on the use and extent of quality assurance and strategic management mechanisms in the U.S. and Europe. We also examine historical developments in legislation/regulations regarding higher education, as they relate to quality assurance and strategic management. In short, we offer a time line of quality assurance and strategic management in the U.S. and Europe.

With respect to the prominence of U.S. models and voices we address the framing and professional context of the introduction of quality assurance and strategic management models. Here, in addition to our review of the literature in the U.S., we analyze various professional sites in Europe to determine the extent to which quality assurance and strategic management in Europe have been framed by models drawn from other countries. We analyze the programs and keynote speakers of two conferences, the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers (CHER) and the European Association for Institutional Research (EAIR), and the authors and articles of one professional journal, Tertiary Education and Management (TEAM – the journal of EAIR). In conducting these analyses, we identify who is speaking and what (and whose) models of strategic management and quality assurance are being invoked. In short, we construct the professional (and political economic) context of the adoption of quality assurance and strategic management.

Finally, with respect to terminology and adaptation, we consider what is different and what is lost in the translation in mechanisms of quality assurance and strategic management in Europe and the U.S. Again we rely on reviews of literature as well as on a consideration of policy developments in the U.S. and Europe. In short, we take some first steps towards the beginnings of a comparative glossary of quality assurance and strategic management terminology that yields a sense of the distinctive connotations these concepts and practices have in different contexts.

The timing of quality assurance and strategic management

In this section we trace the introduction of quality assurance and strategic management policies and practices into higher education in the U.S. and Europe, generally, then focus on Germany and Austria to underscore variation within the EU.

United States. The idea of quality assurance in the United States dates back to the formation of accrediting bodies. The oldest of the six regional accrediting associations were established in the late 1800s: the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, founded in 1885; the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, founded in 1887; and the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Like the three other accrediting bodies – Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges – they are voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit bodies. Although these associations are non-governmental, their decisions regarding the accreditation of institutions affects eligibility for federal funding (including student financial aid). The

associations cover education from kindergarten through higher education, and are devoted to quality assurance and improvement. The regional associations oversee the accreditation of institutions. (There are dozens of other specialized and professional accrediting associations that accredit programs in particular fields – e.g., Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology; Certification in these fields is also a function of state licensing bodies.) Thus, quality assurance began in the U.S. as a self-regulatory activity organized by non-governmental associations.

Many of the current quality related practices of colleges and universities in the U.S. can be traced to the practices of the accrediting bodies. For example, one of the standard features of an accreditation review is an institutional self-study. Then a team of external visitors, who spend a couple of days at the institution, conduct a review. Subsequently, a report is developed, to which the institution can respond before the final evaluation is provided. These practices continue today, and have been adapted to internal program review of academic units within universities. It is common for universities to have a system of rolling reviews for academic programs, every so many years (generally between 5–10 years). The first stage of such reviews is a self-study by the department, followed by a review conducted by a team of external visitors (who are experts in the particular academic field) that develops a draft report, to which the unit responds, after which a final report is drafted and shared with the central administration and the academic unit.

For public institutions, state-level program review has followed a somewhat related model. “By 1990, over two-thirds of the states had resolved the question of assessment policy by adopting a campus-centered approach, allowing each institution to develop its own statements of expected outcomes and its own means to gather evidence of their achievement” (Ewell 1997, p. 363). In short, quality assurance of academic institutions and programs has combined internal self-assessment with external review. The weight of the emphasis is on evaluation grounded in the analysis and norms of peers and peer institutions and programs.

At the same time, there is also a considerable history in the U.S. of evaluation of professionals not by peers, but clients. In the 1970s, student evaluations of their teachers began to be widely used in colleges and universities, and were incorporated into the annual review process for faculty. There is an extensive literature on these evaluations (Aleamoni 1976; Feldman 1976, 1977; Seldin 1984, 1999), which are the principal criteria for evaluating faculty’s instructional activity and are used by over 95% of department heads nationwide (Cashin 1999). If many have claimed that in research universities the evaluation of teaching has not counted for much (Fairweather 1996; Finkelstein 1984; Finkelstein et al. 1998), some recent work suggests that

such evaluations are of increasing and considerable significance (Leslie et al. 1999).

In the 1980s, quality issues began to be introduced and implemented in distinctive ways in U.S. higher education. At the state level, state boards and legislatures began to emphasize and to connect assessment and accountability. At the institutional level, quality review processes began to take on new meaning and to be exercised through different mechanisms and processes in the context of strategic management efforts to refocus institutions.

Perhaps the clearest and widely cited example of state initiatives in quality assurance is the performance based funding model introduced in Tennessee in 1979 (Banta et al. 1996). Resources are allocated according to quality performance measures. The model has been revised and refined at least four times in subsequent years. Its origins lay in studies that were commissioned in Tennessee in 1975, focused on accountability and improvement. However, throughout the 1980s and 1990s state bodies have raised the issue of and discussed student learning and program quality measures in the context of resource allocation cycles. For the most part, this has been more a matter of raising considerations and identifying measures that must appear in annual reports than of linking performance on specific criteria to particular dollar increments in appropriating state monies. Nevertheless, institutions have had to demonstrate their accountability in the use of public funds.

Similarly, at the institutional level, quality assurance practices came to campuses in new forms and somewhat more significant ways in the 1980s. Already well-versed in the processes of self-study, external visiting teams, and program review, new versions of quality assurance emerged on campuses. In the context of increased pressure from states and the public, and an increasing push to strategically manage and restructure academic institutions and work, even the old versions of quality assurance took on a new significance. Although still driven by peer review evaluations increasingly came to be linked to internal resource allocation.

Quality management came to U.S. higher education in 1991 in the form of variations of Total Quality Management (Marchese 1997). In fact, an article in the November 1991 Bulletin of the American Association of Higher Education was entitled, "TQM Reaches the Academy" (Marchese 1991). A 1995 American Council on Education survey found that 65% of campuses reported TQM/CQI activity (Marchese 1997, p. 511). In addition, El-Khawas (1995) found that from 1988–1995 the proportion of institutions involved in assessment rose from 55 to 94%.

The emphasis on quality has influenced and been evident in strategic management and restructuring efforts on campuses. In part, this has meant developing new forms of quality assurance in terms of who is doing assess-

ment: evaluation of academic work is increasingly being done by non-academic professionals, so-called managerial professionals, a category of employee in the U.S. that is growing far more rapidly than faculty (Rhoades 1998; Rhoades and Sporn 2002). In part, the new developments have involved giving new teeth and meaning to old forms of quality assurance – i.e., peer review. For example, most universities have undertaken program evaluation processes, with the results of peer reviews (internal as well as external) being a factor affecting resource allocation and part of a larger process of prioritizing programs.

In the U.S., strategic planning has a long history, as institutions were created from the top down, by boards of trustees and presidents. The idea of strategic action dates back at least to the late 1800s, with the introduction of various new types of institutions and courses of study (Scott 1983; Veysey 1965). It can also be traced through the first half of the twentieth century, with the reform and redirection of many liberal arts colleges (Clark 1970). Although some scholars date the rise of strategic planning with George Keller's book, *Academic Strategy* (1983), it had arrived well before that. Indeed, in a 1982 article in the AAHE Bulletin, Baldrige and Okini were already asking, "Strategic Planning in Higher Education – New Tool, or New Gimmick" (1982). In the 1980s and into the 1990s, many institutions adopted some form of strategic planning, as colleges and universities across the country sought to restructure strategically. However, by the early 1990s a counter-discourse challenging and pointing to the decline of strategic planning had already surfaced, with Mintzberg's book, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning* (1994).

In the latter half of the twentieth century, planning in a more formalized sense dates back to the 1950s. Peterson (1997) traces the various stages of planning over time, from adaptive to resource flow, comparative advantage, niche, mission, resource allocation, outcomes assessment, and postdate. Planning has run through various stages, focusing in the early and mid-1970s, for example, on enrollment management (Gumpert and Pusser 1997). In the late 1970s, 1980s and 1990s the focus shifted to strategic planning and restructuring (Hearn 1988; Mortimer and Tierney 1979), which Peterson dates from 1975. Similarly, Birnbaum (2000) traces various fads in management, from the program planning budgeting system (PPBS), management by objectives (MBO), and zero-based budgeting of the 1960s and 1970s, to strategic planning and bench marking of the 1970s and 1980s to TQM and Business Process Reengineering in the 1980s and 1990s. He characterizes these fads as a second managerial revolution dating from the 1960s that trumpeted the goals of systematic and orderly analysis and planning. In general,

the activities of (strategic) planning involved and extended quality assurance practices.

Europe. In Europe, too, the emergence and practice of quality assurance practices and strategic management are intertwined. But they are far more recent phenomena. Quality assurance was introduced into policy discussions and institutional practices took place in some European countries well before it emerged in Germany and Austria. As early as the mid-1980s, quality control mechanisms like independent quality audit standards and units were being created in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands (Cave et al. 1997; Kells 1988; Van Vught 1988). Across countries, the discussion of quality assurance was related to limitations of public expenditures and demands for greater accountability in higher education. It also was related to governmental policies introducing more self-regulation into higher education. The aim was to enlarge institutional autonomy and improve institutional performance. Strategic planning and management emerged as mechanisms by which institutions could engage in self-assessment and program review to assure quality throughout the system (Van Vught 1988).

From the mid-1980s, quality assurance discussions emerged in other European countries, such as Belgium, Denmark, Finland, and Norway. Given this pattern in Europe, it is perhaps appropriate that quality assurance emerged as a topic in the 1987 meetings of the European Association for Institutional Research (EAIR), which were held in Twente, The Netherlands (Kells and Van Vught 1988). The conference program included many presentations on institutions' self-assessment and self-regulation. By 1989, quality was one of several "tracks" of the annual EAIR meeting, around which the conference schedule was organized. It was to remain so throughout the 1990s. Moreover, quality and strategic assessment came to be featured for the overall conference. Consider the topics of the following keynote addresses: 1992, contextual planning; 1994, quality as a university culture; 1997, innovative universities; 1998, learning and innovation in organizations; and 1999, on renewed institutions.

The same pattern is found in the meetings of the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers (CHER). In the 1990s, the following themes were featured: 1992, curriculum and institutional control; 1993, new management paradigms; 1994, institutional management, peer review and disciplinary cultures; 1995, financing and quality; 1996, management in higher education institutions; 1997, "Quality and Evaluation in Higher Education" as the theme of the meeting, with papers and sessions on the impact of quality review on institutions, the evaluative state and new public management, limits of evaluating quality, quality evaluation, and international bench-

marking for institutional evaluation; 1998, there was a track on evaluation and quality assurance; and 1999, performance-based research funding, quality in research.

It took a few years for the focus on quality assurance and strategic management to move from topics discussed in professional meetings to formal policies and practices implemented not only within particular countries but across the landscape of European higher education. For example, the European Commission (EC) promoted the extension of external assessment of academic work at the level of the subject or discipline. In the absence of systematic evaluation procedures across the continent, in 1991 the European Pilot Project for Evaluating Quality in Higher Education was established to enhance awareness for evaluation, to enrich procedures, to transfer experience and to impart a European dimension to evaluation. Between November 1994 and June 1995, the project involved 17 countries and 46 institutions. It focused on the evaluation of teaching and learning in two areas: engineering and communications or art design. In many countries the project triggered discussion about evaluation. Subsequently, several countries asked for follow-up of the project (Thune and Staropoli 1997).

Germany. Discussion of quality assurance as a policy goal in higher education began in Germany in 1990, much of it taking place in the context of heightened concerns about public spending. Expanding student numbers and a growing awareness of drop out rates raised concerns about efficiencies in higher education. Out of this came a push for accountability in terms of performance indicators. Thus, quality assurance and strategic management were intertwined.

In 1994/5, the German Conference of Rectors together with the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Culture initiated two quality assurance projects to develop institutional profiles that would include indicators allowing for measurement of performance (Müller-Böling 1995a). A major goal was to achieve organizational development through the use of teaching reports/evaluations, internal evaluation, site visits, assessment reports, and follow-up visits. Several significant changes resulted. Three regional evaluation agencies were created: the Association of Northern German Universities; the Central Evaluation Agency; and the Evaluation Agency North Rhine-Westphalia. A quality assurance network of German universities was established, administered by a private non-profit company, Hochschul-Informationssystem GmbH (HIS) (<http://www.his.de>). A center for higher education development (Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung – see <http://www.che.de>) was formed, financed by the Bertelsmann foundation. Most importantly, quality assurance was a major

element of the 1998 federal higher education framework law (<http://www.bmbf.de/deutsch/veroeff/index.htm>).

Related to developments in quality assurance were milestones in the reform of German higher education in strategic management. For example, there has been a push to enhance institutions' financial autonomy by utilizing lump-sum budgeting. In addition, performance contracts have been established as a framework within which institutions can work and regulate themselves (Ziegele 1998). Finally, quality measures have come to be utilized not only to position the universities externally, but as a criteria for strategically allocating resources internally.

Austria. Discussion of quality assurance and strategic management in Austria also began in the 1990s. In line with trends in Europe, the discussion of quality assurance was linked to an effort to enhance the efficient and effective use of public financial resources (i.e., accountability) and to the idea of loosening ties between state ministries and institutions (i.e., autonomy). In 1993 Austria changed its legislation regarding the organization of universities: the new law (UOG93) prescribed evaluation of teaching and research, and at the same time permitted more institutional autonomy. Quality is a key element in the legal and mandated reform of Austrian higher education (Altrichter and Schratz 1992; Stifter 2000). As part of UOG93, quality assurance and evaluation have been implemented through the creation of new structures and evaluation instruments. Significant attention has been devoted to teaching, with the aim of increasing accountability and improving practices in areas of perceived deficiency (e.g., classroom performance) and inefficiency (e.g., time-to-degree).

The implementation of quality assurance mechanisms comes not only from changes in national framework laws, but from strategic management mechanisms put into effect within and among institutions. For example, UOG93 created Deans and Vice Deans of Studies who are responsible for managing evaluation in all areas of teaching. Moreover, after 1997, an amendment to UOG93 has stipulated instruments that can be used for evaluation. It also included the area of research for evaluation and management. The results of such evaluations are to be used for tenure decisions and hiring, as well as for career planning and human resource development.

The professional and political economic framing of the discourse: The invocation of models

In the context of the timing of quality assurance and strategic management's emergence in the U.S. and Europe, three questions emerge. First, what are the

professional and political economic contexts and processes in and by which U.S. models of quality assurance and strategic management were framed? Second, have U.S. models explicitly been borrowed by European countries, and what are the professional and political economic contexts in and by which that borrowing is framed? And third, have some European countries been more dominant than others in borrowing, translating, and articulating these models?

United States. Several scholars in the U.S. have analyzed the life cycles of new quality assurance and strategic management processes. They find that first, as institutions that have long been linked to the business community, and to non-governmental organizations (such as foundations) linked to the business community, U.S. colleges and universities have long looked to the private sector for models of improvement. Second, although as a system, U.S. higher education has been marked by relatively weak federal and even state levels of governmental control, states have increasingly exercised influence over their public higher education institutions in ways that shape quality assurance and strategic management practices.

Most comparative higher education scholars characterize the U.S. system as being market driven. Using Clark's (1983) so-called "triangle model" of governance, they have seen the U.S. as having weak federal government influence, weak professional influence, and strong market influence (Becher and Kogan 1992; Clark 1983). In this market driven system the initial source of many models is the private "marketplace", the business world, both indirectly as well as directly. For example, the performance based models in Tennessee came out of studies in the mid-1970s supported by the Ford and Kellogg Foundations, and by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. Quality management models such as TQM and Continuous Organizational Improvement started in business before percolating into higher education: quality management management became the reigning management philosophy in corporate American from the mid-1980s; it hit U.S. colleges and universities around 1991. As Marchese (1997, p. 7) has written, the models "arrive at higher education's doorstep five years after their trial in business, often just as corporations are discarding them."

The specific mechanism by which such models move from industry to higher education have not been sufficiently researched. However, there are various sites in which the boundaries between sectors can be spanned: advisory councils of academic colleges (engineering and business schools in particular have advisory councils with members of big business well represented); university boards of trustees, which generally have a significant representation of business persons, and corporate boards, which most univer-

sity presidents are members of; formal groups that combine the leadership of higher education and business, such as the Business-Higher Education Forum (Slaughter 1990); and informal associations and circles in which university presidents and corporate leaders travel. Clearly, there is a mimetic process whereby higher education looks to and adopts the practices (and sometimes the goals – see Slaughter and Leslie 1997) of the private sector, which is seen as more efficient than the public sector, reflecting the larger political economy and culture of the U.S.

Yet management practices also move from the governmental sector into higher education in the U.S. Some scholars see government as the intervening sector in the movement of management models from business to higher education: “Every six months, it seems, a new fad sweeps through management circles. First it strikes the business community, then government, and finally education” (Baldrige and Okini 1982, p. 15). Others point to practices that originated in government. In tracing the life cycles of Program Planning Budgeting System, Management by Objective, and Zero-Base Budgeting, Birnbaum (2000, p. xvii) notes:

Each of these rational approaches was first fully developed in government, personally supported by the president of the U.S., and disseminated from the federal to state governments, where it eventually found its way into higher education.

There are interesting contradictions in this market driven system. The global market does not seem to have directly driven quality assurance practices; but widespread references to higher education’s role in contributing to the nation’s globally competitive position focus on what academic programs and fields of research should be emphasized, encouraging institutions to be strategic in managing their programs and research activities. Similarly, although the federal government may have been the original site for some of the quality assurance and strategic management practices that U.S. higher education has adopted, public sector colleges and universities have been more directly influenced by the demands of state governments. And the principal concerns of the states have less to do with global competition than with the state economy and the efficient use of the public monies of the state, leading institutions to adopt certain managerial practices. Yet indirectly, reference to higher education’s role in promoting the country’s global economic competitiveness is prominent in federal government reports and agencies; such an emphasis is the focus of science and technology policy, and encourages universities to be more strategic in supporting and building its academic and research programs.

Europe. As in the U.S., scholars in Europe have traced inter-sectoral and international patterns in the development and adoption of quality assurance and strategic management models. A general overview of these attests to the influence of U.S. models, which can be understood partly in terms of a professional and political economic framing of management practices. Such framing is evident in the general timing and directional flow of quality assurance and strategic management models, and it is played out in the discourse of professional associations and publications. Beyond the general pattern, however, there are important variations within Europe, not only in adopting American models, but in taking the lead in promoting them throughout Europe. Such variations are related to the professional and political economic position and policies of different European nations. Moreover, European systems are more nation-state centered, which affects the adoption of quality assurance and strategic management models.

Neave (1997, p. 278) has stated that, "Never in the recent history of higher education in Europe have we seen such a frenzy of model exportation, from North America to Western Europe and from thence eastwards." Others may provide less colorful or critical characterizations, but the pattern of borrowing is clear. Thus, Westerheijden's (1999) recent review of developments in quality assurance points to the significance of various American authors and models. H.R. Kells' 1983 book, *Self-Study Processes: A Guide for Postsecondary Institutions*, published by the American Council on Education, is a key example of U.S. approaches being picked up in Europe. But more than being "picked up," they were actively promoted: for instance, Westerheijden notes Kells' "assiduous work for quality assurance around the globe" (1999, p. 236). In other words, the pattern of adoption is a matter of professional influence, effected through the publications and conferences as well as the consulting activities of professionals. Thus, Kells' later books (1992, 1993) present U.S. models of self-regulation, self-study, and performance indicators to European audiences. Indeed, the longstanding U.S. model of self-regulation is being adopted in Europe: "Accreditation as a recurrent, more or less system-wide practice used to be American, and since 1990 also something of Central and Eastern Europe" (Westerheijden 1999, p. 247). It has taken the form of a "four stage model" (Van Vught and Westerheijden 1994): independent organization of the procedure, self-evaluation, site visits, and public external evaluation reports. Similar processes have been emphasized in the European equivalent of TQM (Westerheijden 1999).

However, there are significant variations within Europe, with some countries taking the lead in translating, literally and figuratively, the U.S. management schemes. An early European leader was England. This may be due to: the relative closeness of the British higher education system (compared to

continental European systems) to that of the U.S., with universities being independent corporations; a political economy in the 1980s focused on reducing governmental expenditures and increasing accountability of public entities; and to language. With the increased emphasis on accountability came the increased power of managers over academe, in government and in institutions (Harvey and Green 1993; Harvey and Knight 1996; Kogan and Hanney 2000; Kogan and Kogan 1983). National bodies, such as the Higher Education Quality Council, and the Quality Assessment Committee of the Higher Education Funding Council for England were established in the mid-1990s, with institutional quality audits and teacher quality assessments.

In addition to England, the Netherlands has taken the lead in articulating quality assurance mechanisms for the continent (Kells 1999). The timing of such activity followed the Maastricht Treaty (Westerheijden 1999). First came a EU pilot project with program assessments in 17 European countries. Then came the CRE's continuous program of institutional evaluations. Subsequently, Van Vught and Westerheijden (1994) proposed that a "multiple accreditation system" might develop for Europe as a whole, with the Netherlands recognizing the significance of a "next generation" of non-national quality assessment (Westerheijden 1999).

The cross-Atlantic and intra-European patterns of influence are evident in the professional discourse of higher education. The U.S. is prominent, not only in the presence of its scholars but in the ongoing references to its models of quality assurance. Contributing to this prominence is the early experience of the U.S. in quality assurance, the resources of U.S. higher education (and of U.S. economic enterprises, such as publishing houses and software companies) that facilitate the international flow of its scholars and ideas, and the fact that English is the world language of discourse in research, science, and the professions. Normative professional influence is exercised through professional mechanisms such as conferences and journals; the fact that these are in English facilitates the influence of U.S. scholars, experiences, and ideas. As outlined earlier, professional discourse on issues of higher education in Europe mainly happen in three locations: the annual meeting of the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers (CHER), the annual forum of the European Association of Institutional Research (EAIR), and the journal – founded in 1995 – Tertiary Education and Management (TEAM).

CHER was established in 1988 in Germany as a group "to discuss the current state and future avenues of research on higher education" in Europe (From the Report on the First Year of CHER, 1988/89, by the CHER secretary, Ulrich Teichler). The steering group included six scholars from Germany, the UK, Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Early on, the annual meetings had no formal program but consisted of reports of member

scholars' ongoing research. In 1991, CHER welcomed participants from the US. In 1992, the annual meeting had a subject focus on higher education and the world of work with the following themes: labor market expectations, individuals within the labor market, the characteristics of occupations, government's role, institutional functions, curriculum and its control, and methodological issues.

Starting in 1993, CHER had a formal program, that year concentrated on graduate education. Of the 43 participants 5 (12%) came from the US, among them such prominent scholars as Herb Kells (then located in Denmark) and Martin Trow. Burton Clark gave the keynote address. Out of eleven presentations at the conference, two focused on the US. In 1994, the conference theme was cross-national studies in higher education. Out of 38 participants, 3 were U.S. scholars. Burton Clark again served as a keynote speaker for the plenary session at the end of the conference. Sheldon Rothblatt – another U.S. scholar – was elected as a member of the CHER board. In 1995, the CHER conference was focused on perspectives in higher education research. Out of the 35 persons on the program five (14%) were from the U.S. Remarkably, again Burton Clark was one of the key speakers of the opening panel. In 1996, the CHER meeting was organized by three scholars, one of whom was Elaine El-Khawas from the U.S. The theme was governance and management in higher education. Two out of 8 sessions were chaired by U.S. scholars – one as a plenary concluding session. In 1997 the CHER meeting focused on the “evaluative state.” The program consisted of 15 paper sessions (two from the U.S.). Of the three keynote speakers, one was from the U.S., David Dill. In 1998, the CHER meeting's theme was, “higher education research – achievements, conditions, and new challenges.” Of 34 presentations, 6 (18%) came from U.S. scholars – one of them (Sheldon Rothblatt) being part of the formal opening and plenary session and one (David Dill) being part of the concluding plenary session. During that meeting another U.S. scholar (Elaine El-Khawas) was elected to the board (and Sheldon Rothblatt stepped down). In 1999, CHER focused on the research function in higher education. Of the 21 presentations in the program, two were U.S. scholars involved in plenary theme sessions. Thus, over the years, the representation of U.S. professors on the program has been small but stable. More importantly, U.S. scholars have been prominent in keynote and plenary presentations, suggesting the significance of U.S. ideas and models for European scholars.

EAIR is a larger European higher education association, with about 300 people attending the annual forum. In its very inception, EAIR reflects the framing influence of U.S. professionals. It emerged out of the Association of Institutional Research (AIR) in the U.S., bringing together scholars, practitioners, and policy makers largely from Europe, focused on academic

presentations regarding key policy arenas. As early as 1987 there is reference to U.S. and Canadian models and experiences: of the six papers in the book that came out of the meeting, four focus on U.S. methods and two on Canadian experiences of self-study and program review. We consider the conference themes, the representation of U.S. scholars in keynote presentations, and the representation of U.S. scholars in paper presentations in the quality track of the conference, for the years 1989–1999 (see Table 1). (no program was available for 1990).

The conference themes speak to the major concerns of European higher education in the 1990s: the new environment, management and leadership, innovation and change, as well as the shifting role of universities. Such concerns are consistent with other literature on the changing nature of higher education in Europe (e.g., massification, managerialism, deregulation). Perhaps most striking is the 1989 conference theme – “Towards Excellence in European Higher Education in the 1990s – which captures the prominence of quality assurance schemes, as does the quality track of the conference, established early on.

The representation of U.S. scholars on the EAIR program takes two forms. Perhaps most significant, and impressive, is the consistent representation (7 out of the 10 meetings) of U.S. scholars as keynote speakers. That type of U.S. participation points to EAIR members’ interest in U.S. models. Similarly, the small but consistent (3–5) representation of U.S. scholars in paper presentations in the quality track also speaks to an interest in and the significance of U.S. models.

In some areas, U.S. ideas and models are important not simply in terms of their direct representation, but in terms of stimulating European scholars to translate those models into more specific European contexts. For example, in the quality track, there are a large number of presentations by U.K. and Dutch scholars, suggesting that some European countries have taken the lead in developing Europe-specific models of quality assurance, based to some extent on U.S. models. By contrast, in the strategic management tracks U.S. scholars were quite dominant.

One other source of professional discourse for exploring the flow of models from the U.S. to Europe is TEAM, the journal of EAIR, created in 1995. Quality has been a prominent theme in this journal’s articles. In the late 1990s, about 20% of the articles each year focus on quality related questions. The topics of the articles converge around quality assurance and enhancement themes (e.g., titles of TEAM articles include external quality monitoring in the market place; quality enhancement in principle and practice: a case study in leading change; approaches to effective quality management; benchmarking academic standards in the UK; responses of academe to quality

Table 1. Representation of U.S. scholars at EAIR meetings from 1989 to 1999

Year	Location	U.S. keynote (of total)	U.S. presentations in quality tracks (of total)	Theme
1989	Trier, Germany	1 (5)	6 (37)	Towards excellence in European higher education in the 1990s
1990				(program data not available)
1991	Edinburgh, Scotland	0 (4)	4 (12)	Managing the higher education environment
1992	Brussels, Belgium	1 (5)	7 (29)	Higher education in Europe for tomorrow: Strategy for cooperation or competition
1993	Turku, Finland	2 (10)	5 (33)	Higher education in a changing environment: Regional, national and trans-national issues
1994	Amsterdam, The Netherlands	0 (4)*	3 (15)	Less administration, more governance: Professional leadership for academic professionals (*3 out of 6 track chairs are from the U.S.) Dill, El-Khawas, Clark
1995	Zurich, Switzerland	1 (3)	3 (18)	Dynamics in higher education: Traditions challenged by new paradigms
1996	Budapest, Hungary	1 (4)	0 (23)	Higher education in the market place: Strategies for survival and success
1997	Warwick, UK	1 (5)	5 (17)	The university of the twenty-first century
1998	San Sebastian, Spain	1 (4)	3 (17)	Higher education institutions: Open to innovation, willing to learn
1999	Lund, Sweden	0 (6)	4 (17)	New realities B renewed institutions

reforms in higher education: a comparative study of England and Sweden) (Bauer and Henkel 1997; Gordon 1998; Harvey 1997; Middlehurst 1997; Yorke 1999). The authors are primarily from the UK and Sweden. The empirical examples are mainly derived from Australia and the UK. The references in the articles come largely from the U.S., the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK: in the case of the U.S. the most common references are to the work of Burton Clark, David Dill, and Martin Trow (Clark 1997; Dill 1995; Trow 1993).

The pattern is not one of European systems simply adopting U.S. models. The analysis of TEAM articles reveals that by the mid-1990s the language of quality assurance was prominently established among European higher education researchers and practitioners, with some countries taking the lead in articulating models. The pattern evident in the authorship of the journal corresponds with the situation in European higher education. Several centers – in the Netherlands, the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS), in the UK, the Quality Support Centre (QSC: see <http://www.ou.ac.uk/qsc>) in London and the Centre for Research into Quality (CRQ: see <http://www.uce.ac.uk/crq>) in Birmingham – are specialized in developing quality assurance models and distributing them among institutions and decision makers throughout Europe. Moreover, Sweden (like the UK and the Netherlands) has been one of the first countries to implement quality assurance policies. Upon close examination, however, the models developed in these European countries reveal the influence of quality assurance in the U.S.: self-evaluation, external quality review teams, new assessment methods and performance indicators for government policy makers and institutional managers.

Moving now to the analysis of Germany and Austria, we can see the influence of the political economic context in Europe, the significance of the state in continental Europe, which affects the path of adaptation of quality assurance models. Models move from government to higher education, through nationwide, higher education reforms. In Germany and Austria, quality assurance has been merged with such broader reform issues.

Germany. In German higher education reform, U.S. models of quality assurance have not been left unmentioned. Indeed, at the CHER conference in 1994 – at the time when quality of teaching became a prominent topic in Germany – one major presentation from a German scholar (who was working at that time at a renowned higher education center at a U.S. university) focused on the “significance of the American higher education system and American persistence theories for a model to shorten German time to degree”. High drop-out rates and extended time-to-graduation Germany led to increased

concern about efficiency in higher education. Measures and models of quality assurance have been part of the policy response to this situation.

More recent developments in Germany focus on a more comprehensive approach to reforming higher education. Hence, under the title "Zielvereinbarungen" (goal contracts) and "Finanzautonomie" (financial autonomy), contracted and performance-based budgeting together with institutional autonomy have been implemented at increasing numbers of German universities. The aim has been to increase quality (measured as efficiency and effectiveness), accountability, and self-regulation through effective leadership. Major players in the reform process have been the conference of rectors and CHE (Center of Higher Education Development).

What models have been used in this reform process? Basically, we find the principles of "New Public Management (NPM)," as well as U.S. experiences with governance and leadership in major publications (De Boer 1998; Ferlie et al. 1996; Müller-Böling 1995b; Müller-Böling et al. 1999; Müller-Böling and Kuchler 1998; Weiler, 1998a, 1998b). NPM was developed in public administration and can be easily applied to the public higher education context in Germany: it involves strengthening market-orientation and competition, management concepts from private industry, decentralized structures with increased freedom for individuals and units, and output control and assessment (Müller-Böling and Scheiterer 1999). These principles have challenged universities in Germany and have triggered a demand for consulting and training of university officials. (CHE offers consulting and training for university leaders; content ranges from management tools to evaluation of study programs).

Austria. In Austria, the content of the reform is much the same as in Germany. The models being applied are almost identical. The 1993 legal mandate was labeled "management" reform. Although various policy makers expressed their concerns about applying business models to higher education (Bast 1990; Busek 1992; Höllinger and Steinbacher 1992; Laske and Hammer 1992), the reform promoted deregulation, decentralization, effective planning and governance structures, flexibility in budgetary and personnel matters, clear lines of responsibility, and stronger leadership. In addition, it promoted implement mechanisms, such as evaluation and quality control, boards and buffer organizations, university management teams, and deans of studies.

Austrian higher education reform draws on a mix of business and U.S. university models. More recent reforms take the process one step further down the road towards a U.S. type system. In the 1998 "white" paper on higher education in Austria (Weissbuch der Hochschulbildung in Österreich) the minister of education reemphasized the principles of the 1993 reform.

Special attention is paid to open access and aid programs for students, expansion/differentiation of degrees and institutions and reform, as well as consolidation and extension of the reform process. In March 1999 the ministry of education launched ideas for “vollrechtsfähige Universitäten” (legally autonomous universities) in a discussion paper. The principles are: autonomous decisions regarding resource allocation of budgets and personnel, flexibility and efficiency of administration, and the possibilities to create profiles in teaching and research through special focus areas. In order to implement this model, the ministry suggests performance contracts, term/private contracts for university personnel, and governing boards for each university.

Summary. In short, the adoption of quality assurance and strategic management models in the U.S. and Europe have each been framed by a political economic context that calls for greater accountability in public sector entities and a modeling of public sector management practices on private sector models. Yet the particulars of the professional contexts vary in the U.S. and Europe, and there are two patterns of borrowing and adoption across countries that result. There is a considerable amount of borrowing of U.S. models in Europe. But if in the U.S. the borrowing in higher education looks first to the market, and then to state level government, in Europe, the flow is more from national system to national system, and from national government to national higher education system. Moreover, some European countries have taken the lead in borrowing, translating, and promoting models of quality assurance and strategic management.

The terminology of quality assurance and strategic management, and adaptations to local context

Having tracked the timing and adoption of quality assurance and strategic management models, we now attend more to their local adaptation. Precisely what do the policies and practices that attach to these terms mean in U.S., European, German, and Austrian higher education? Given the patterns of borrowing that we have identified, what is different and what is lost in the translation in applying U.S. models and processes in Europe?

United States. In the U.S., the meaning of quality assurance, and relatedly of strategic management, have been shaped by three dimensions of the higher education system. First, the regional accrediting bodies reflect the significance of regional considerations in higher education policy. That aspect of U.S. higher education is also reflected in the state by state variations in policy

and practice given the significance of state governments in regulating and allocating resources to public colleges and universities (the federal government's regulations and resource allocation, in the area of student aid and research funding, extend to public and private, as well as to proprietary higher education institutions). Second, state level involvement in higher education policy has focused more on accountability than quality, demanding only a minimalist conception of quality, which is also consistent with the activities of the accrediting associations. Third, given its interrelationship with various markets, and the political economic and cultural emphasis on the private sector, colleges and universities look to business for models of excellence and efficiency. Quality assurance in the U.S. has never been taken to mean a high standard of comparable quality across institutions. That is evident first of all in the regional nature of the six regional accrediting associations that have long been responsible for quality assurance. Those associations have focused on ensuring a minimal level of competence. Their aim has not been to ensure that institutions within the same region have the same level of quality, only that they all meet a minimal level of quality. The significance of variation within and across regions is reinforced by the role of state governments in governing, coordinating, allocating resources to, and regulating the quality of public higher education within states. It is also evident in the state specific nature of much professional accreditation in the U.S. For example, lawyers take state bar exams. Similarly, public schoolteachers are certified to teach within a particular state, not nationally.

The involvement of states in quality assurance in public higher education has increased in recent decades, as budgets for public higher education increased, and as concerns about accountability also increased. In the case of public higher education, there has been a push to increase assessment. The focus has not been on establishing or using tests to measure minimal standards of student achievement or proficiency; rather it has been on ensuring the more efficient use of public resources. Although there is very definitely a sense among state policy makers that the quality of undergraduate education is not what it should be, this has been translated for the most part into accountability efforts focused more on productivity (e.g., graduation rates) and on faculty time allocation (e.g., teaching more undergraduate classes, more advising time with undergraduates) than on quality. That has encouraged institutions to be more strategic in the management of their academic portfolios and resources.

The meaning of quality assurance and of strategic management are profoundly shaped in the U.S. by a general sense that private sector entities are more efficient than public ones, and a particular sense that certain private sector practices and conceptions can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency

of colleges and universities. Partly due to its close relations with business, higher education has adopted certain business practices, such as Total Quality Management. Various terms and acronyms have been utilized to characterize the approach, including continuous quality improvement (CQI). There is a magazine listing campuses that are active in quality efforts, *Quality Progress*. The American Association of Higher Education has an Academic Quality Consortium of institutions. Yet this interpretation of quality assurance has almost exclusively been adopted on the non-academic side of colleges and universities, not in academic programs (Marchese 1997).

On the academic side of colleges and universities, what has been more influential are certain assumptions embedded in the private sector. For example, the notion that the customer is always right has been translated into policy makers talking about students (and business employers) as “customers” of the university: in many states, institutions have been “encouraged” to survey graduating students and employer regarding their satisfaction, with such measures being part of the basis of assessing the quality of universities’ work and of allocating state resources to the institutions. The economic downturn in the early 1990s, with its effect on state expenditures to higher education, combined with the increased burden on state budgets resulting from the “federalism” of the Reagan years (in which various federal responsibilities were shifted to the state level) led to an increased focus on productivity which forced higher education institutions to think more seriously about strategic management and restructuring. Again, higher education looked to the private sector for examples of how to undertake reengineering. Thus, most public universities have undergone some sort of internal evaluation process in which they assessed their strengths and weaknesses. That has involved reassessing “core competencies”, drawing from the private sector: “In academic terms, core competence might be understood as a distinctive collection of disciplines or professional knowledge and skill within an institution” (Dill 1997, p. 183). In their strategic planning processes universities sought to achieve mission clarification. And universities sought increasingly to gather more data and to develop algorithms to guide internal resource allocation to the most productive units.

In the above sorts of processes, quality was generally a consideration, but was far from a principal focus. The 1990s saw reduced allocations to many high quality units (e.g., in classics, philosophy, education, social work, foreign languages) which were seen as being “unproductive” and of declining significance in the 21st century university. In a very real sense, quality came to be replaced by productivity as the key issue, in strategically managing colleges and universities.

Europe. In the European context, the particular meaning of quality assurance has been profoundly shaped by the extraordinary developments in recent years towards establishing a European Union. The move to unify Europe is perhaps most evident in the economic arena, in the adoption of a common currency, the EURO. There is also evidence in the political arena, though perhaps it is less plain to the external observer, of a move to enforce common values in regard to various issues, including social policy (one clear example is the treatment of immigrants, and the negotiation between the EU and Austria over the remarks of one of the members of a coalition government). Higher education systems have not remained untouched by these developments. For example, heightened concerns about public spending have been very much related to the common fiscal demands placed on countries seeking membership in the EU. In addition, cooperation, and student and staff mobility across national boundaries in Europe has been evident in programs such as ERASMUS and SOCRATES.

In the context of the EU, quality assurance has come to mean the assurance of equivalent quality across countries. Through the activities of the EU in higher education policy making and research funding, certain standards have been promoted. Milestones in this process include the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations (<http://www.unige.ch/cre/activities/Bologna%20Forum/bologna%20declaration.htm>), and the subsequent creation of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) (<http://www.enqa.net/index.html>). The aim is to create a “Europe of Knowledge” that is culturally integrated and globally competitive.

Starting with the Sorbonne Declaration in May 1998, Europe sought to harmonize the complexity and diversity of degree programs and structures in Europe. Although only four countries (France, Germany, Italy, U.K.) signed the agreement (De Wit 2000), the declaration was well received and set the stage for broader initiatives. Subsequently, the concept of “harmonization” was avoided as being too problematic and not sufficiently sensitive to national differences. It has been replaced by an effort to promote “actions which may foster the desired convergence and transparency in qualification structures in Europe” (De Wit 2000, p. 9). Thus, the Bologna Declaration signed by 29 European ministers of education on June 19, 1999, has six major objectives: clear and comparable degrees; two main cycles (undergraduate/graduate); credit transfer system; promotion of mobility; promotion of cooperation in quality assurance; and promotion of common European patterns in higher education.

Even prior to the Bologna Declaration, in September 1998, the European Council formally recommended European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education. This materialized in the establishment of the European

Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). Services of the network to its members mainly include information sharing through newsletters, web sites, and bulletin boards, training workshops and advisory support, as well as seminars and special projects. Members include 13 agencies involved in quality assurance, three international associations, and one regional agency. (For Austria and Germany, all the major quality assurance agencies are part of ENQA.). Much of the focus is on the subject level, and on the quality of subject teaching in national higher education systems.

Up to now, quality assurance as it has been adapted at the level of European cooperation mainly concerns internal assessment. It is not clear how transparent and useful such internal assessment will be for the consumers of higher education, in contrast to the situation in the U.S. It is also not yet clear how quality indicators will be (and are) used at the institutional level, and the extent to which they factor into strategic management activities of universities of the European Union. Thus far, the so-called “four stage model” of quality assurance, leaves out an important fifth step that is part of the system in the U.S. – linking evaluations to resource allocation and strategic decision making. That is somewhat surprising:

Given that the initiatives for quality assurance originated with governments in the 1980s and 1990s that were very cost-and-effect conscious, it may be remarkable that most external evaluation procedures were set up without explicit attention to the follow-up: the exception were the Netherlands with its Inspectorate for Higher Education, and the quality audits by the HEQC. (Westerheijden, 1999, p. 245)

Although many of the processes used by U.S. accreditation bodies are being used in European quality assurance efforts, not all are. Moreover, accreditation itself, as an ongoing process used throughout a national system, is not being adopted in Europe.

Germany. In Germany, quality assurance efforts are particularly evident in the area of instruction (Müller-Böling 1996). This is partly connected to activities in the European Union. The Conference of Rectors in Germany took part in a Pilot Project of the EU on quality assurance, in that way furthering a quality discussion in Germany. In the early 1990s – after reviewing models in the UK, the Netherlands, and France – evaluation and reporting on teaching in particular studies as an instrument of quality assurance prevailed (Barz, Carstensen and Reissert 1996). Increased attention came to be paid to the quality of teaching in entire study programs.

More than just quality, the focus in evaluating instructional effort in Germany has come to focus on relevance and efficiency. Institutions self-

assess and are externally evaluated (i.e., peer review) in terms of indicators of instructional productivity, such as time to degree. Methods range from surveys of graduates and questionnaires for students to teams of experts reporting on visits to specific institutions and consultants advising in certain areas of improvement. The overall goal has been, to move universities from ex-ante to ex-post planning in Germany.

Indeed, quality assurance in Germany has been built into new funding mechanisms in higher education. Based on a revised legal framework (Hochschulrahmengesetz), Globalhaushalte (global or lump sum budgets) have been implemented in many German states in the first half of the 1990s, followed by performance contracts between the state and the institution, which have been used in some German universities and regions (e.g., Hamburg, Baden-Württemberg, Mannheim, Bremen, Lower Saxony) to increase financial autonomy (Finanzautonomie) and accountability (Ertmann 1999; Guntermann 1999; Mönch 1999; Müller-Böling et al. 1999; Sager 1999). In German the word for accountability (Rechenschaftslegung) connotes a strong quantitative approach based on accounting (i.e., input/output calculations). Thus, goal contracts now form the basis for public funding in the different states. Budgets consist of a mixture of volume- and performance-oriented elements, and are based on formulas. Volume-oriented budget elements refund the costs of running the university according to subject costs: built into them are different production functions, models and formulas that refund the education of an economist at a lower level than that of an engineer. The performance-oriented funding component provides significant incentives for institutions to change their behavior and to realize better performance. For example in Lower Saxony, 70% of state monies are allocated according to volume-oriented budgets, leaving a very substantial 25% for performance contingent elements (Ziegele 1998). That is a far higher percentage of state funding than has been implemented in any of the U.S. states that use performance-contracts.

Austria. Similar to the German case, the case of Austria suggests that in more state driven systems, quality assurance can in some regards be implemented far more extensively than it has in the more market driven U.S. system. At the same time Austria offers some examples of distinctive national features in governance and employment that affect the translations of quality assurance and strategic management mechanisms.

Ironically, in Austria's more centralized and smaller higher education system, quality assurance has been translated into resource allocation processes far more powerfully than has been done in the "competitive" U.S. system. Being more state centered may allow for a more rapid adop-

tion of more substantial quality assurance practices. Yet other aspects of the state centered system may continue, leading to a different pattern of strategic management at the level of institutions and individual professors. For example, the organizational reform of 1993 in Austria had far-reaching consequences for institutions of higher education in introducing substantial "management" reforms. Yet it also maintained a national, corporatist tradition of a different sort: it emphasized democratic principles of representation, in line with the Austrian social democratic tradition in politics (University members are distinguished in full professors, assistant (professors), students, and administrators, and all groups, except administrators, are either equally represented or at a 2 (professor) to 1 (assistant) to 1 (student) ration on all committees. That has obvious implications for strategic management.

An even broader higher education reform was offered in 1999, with the title "Universitäre Vollrechtsfähigkeit" (<http://www.bmwf.gv.at/3uniwes/03unirecht/vrfunig/vrfunigindex.htm>). Through decentralizing most decision-making power, the aim is to turn universities into separate legal entities with complete autonomy to manage personnel and finances. In U.S. terms this would mean "privatization" whereby contracts as civil servants would be turned into private employees and resource allocation is based on indicators. However, the German text in Austria never uses this term. And that has implications for the control of professors. Included in this "discussion paper" (so called by the ministry and highly contested by institutional leaders and faculty), are goal contracts and performance based budgeting. With this proposal, the State will continue to allocate a base fixed budget (85% of last years). The remaining 15% (variable budget) will be based on a performance contract which is indicator driven and has to define new or extended academic programs to help increased student participation. Additionally, universities can negotiate extras for special projects and activities to implement the new legal framework.

This new policy thrust gives the state bureaucracy an instrument to ensure quality and accountability. The results of evaluation already in place since 1997 will form the basis to negotiate contracts, to measure success/failure, and to allocate resources. With the new, more conservative government in Austria since February 2000, one can expect movement along these lines sooner rather than later. Currently, the ministry is working together with the Austrian Conference of Rectors to refine and operationalize some of the issues in the paper. As a next step, the public will be informed followed by a broad discussion. Eventually, parliament will decide whether to implement this new reform.

In regard to individual professors, current practices of universities are such that course evaluation is the dominant means of quality assurance. These

are primarily for internal use (e.g., course selection, personal improvement). Although this situation could change if new reform steps are implemented in Austria (Hansen 1998), it is also worth remembering that thus far mechanisms of strategic management at the institutional level are as yet relatively undeveloped.

Summary. In short, then, the particular meanings of quality assurance, and of strategic management, vary significantly between the U.S. and Europe, as well as within Europe. In the U.S., quality assurance can best be understood historically and internally as a process that is regionally and state based, and institution based, through self-study, peer driven processes of assuring minimal standards. At the state level there is a minimalist interpretation of standards, with a focus more on efficiency than on quality. That has encouraged strategic management processes at the institutional level in which quality is a less important consideration than potential productivity. By contrast, quality assurance in the European context is more focused on standardization to prepare for unification, to ensure that higher education systems are relatively equivalent. It has more powerful meaning at the national than at the institutional level. In some regards, with performance contracts, quality assurance is gaining more significance in Europe in resource allocation to institutions than it has in the U.S. Yet at the institutional level the meaning of quality assurance is relatively minimalist, focusing on teaching evaluations and instruction in study programs. It has not been particularly linked to or subordinated to a powerful strategic management process at the institutional level.

Conclusion

In closing, we return to our three questions: To what extent and through what processes have concepts of quality assurance and strategic management been borrowed from the U.S. and adopted in European higher education?; To what extent do considerations of global economic and educational competition and cooperation frame the discourse in the U.S. and Europe surrounding quality assurance and strategic management?; and What are the differences and similarities in European adaptations of U.S. mechanisms of quality assurance and strategic management?

The timing of quality assurance and strategic management practices is such that we can see three patterns. First, these practices emerged in the U.S. well before they did in Europe. In the case of quality assurance, the U.S. experience with such mechanisms dates back before World War II, compared to the 1980s and 90s in Europe. In the case of strategic management, U.S.

universities have been utilizing such practices since the 1960s, compared to the 1990s in Europe. Second, these practices emerged in the U.S. through both mimetic and coercive processes of isomorphism, in which higher education was influenced by private sector and state government practices. In Europe the same mechanisms operated through different structures: multinational business was a source of mimetic isomorphism (e.g., TQM); and national government, with New Public Management, was a source of coercive isomorphism. Those were supplemented by the influence of U.S. academics effected through professionals mechanisms – normative isomorphism.

The prominence of U.S. models and voices was quite evident in the professional and policy discourses surrounding quality assurance and strategic management. Europe is neither in a “dependent” relationship with the U.S., nor on its “periphery.” Nevertheless, Europe’s efforts to keep up and compete with the U.S. was key in shaping the EU’s formation, creating pressure to more efficiently utilize public resources in the national economies of various European countries. Similarly, in the U.S., the press of global competition and the effort to enhance the country’s competitive advantage contributed to borrowing quality assurance and strategic management models from business and state government. Another pattern of borrowing was within EU, with the U.K. and the Netherlands taking the lead in “translating” quality assurance mechanisms from the U.S. to Europe. Such a pattern may reflect the significance of the global professional economy, in which English is the common language.

The terminology and usage of quality assurance and strategic management underscores the significance of local adaptation. The meaning of quality assurance and assessment, particularly as they relate to the strategic management of institutions in the U.S. are quite different from their counterparts in Europe. Context matters, in terms of longstanding political and professional structures, such as the differential strength of campus administrations and state governments in the U.S. versus of national ministries, civil servant status (of professors), and corporatism in Europe. In some regards, this means that quality assurance has been linked to resource allocation nationally in Europe to an extent that it has not in the U.S. Yet strategic management at the institutional level has been undertaken in the U.S. in ways that have not yet been done in Europe.

By comparing the U.S. and Europe in studying globalization we have sought to highlight several points in comparative higher education. We want to underscore the complexity of patterns of borrowing and diffusion. Such complexity may be easier to discern in examining more developed countries. We have further emphasized this complexity by examining patterns within a regional trading bloc, the EU. Regional blocs of nations are influential and

worthy of study. The case of a relatively powerful trading bloc, the EU, highlights the importance of such regional matters in studying globalization. Further, we intended to examine the mechanisms of diffusion across countries, believing that such mechanisms are different for developed than for developing countries. We see professional mechanisms as being particularly significant in these contexts, as they likely are elsewhere, even as we detail the ways in which political economic forces also influence higher education policy in the developed world. Finally, we wanted to explore local adaptations, which we see as central to fully understanding the forces of globalization.

We have only taken some first steps along the above paths. Future research is needed to focus more in-depth on a wider variety of professional mechanisms of influence. Similarly, future research needs to explore in much greater detail the implementation of various quality assurance and strategic management practices. Formal legislation and policy are one thing. Actual practices “on the ground”, in academic departments and faculties, are quite another.

In examining the implementation of quality assurance and strategic management we would encourage scholars to consider a wide range of conditions and effects. We would take issue with Birnbaum’s (2000) conclusion that most managerial fads in universities realize only “virtual adoption,” and really do not touch the basic academic processes of the institution. It depends on your perspective. Even if quality assurance and strategic management translate into only marginal impact on everyday academic practices in departments and faculties, they may have other effects.

For example, we are struck by Westerheijden’s (1999) observation concerning the possible impact of quality assurance in regard to the institutional stratification of higher education systems. He notes that leadership in quality assurance has not come from the most elite private and public universities, or from highly selective liberal arts colleges. Instead, relatively unknown and less selective institutions have undertaken interesting experiments in assessment. At the same time, practices in strategic management, such as benchmarking, tend to reinforce the standards and criteria of the top ranked institutions and of the status quo. The point is to explore whether quality assurance and strategic management enable less prestigious institutions, as in cases of places such as Warwick in England (Clark 1998), to move up in the stratification system.

Similarly, quality assurance and strategic management processes may affect the hierarchy of fields within universities in resource allocation. In the case of the U.S., for example, we noted the prioritizing of productivity over traditional notions of quality in restructuring processes. A similar sort of reprioritizing might be associated with quality assurance processes that

emphasize measurement of tangible and/or commercial research outputs. As it is easier to measure the intellectual products of some fields than others, institutions (and nations) may come to prioritize what can be easily measured over what cannot as they increasingly emphasize assessment.

Our work also points to the possibility that the diffusion of quality assurance and strategic management processes may affect stratification among countries. For example, the “translation” role played by the U.K. and the Netherlands in relation to much of the rest of Europe may affect relations in higher education among countries. As we focus more on regional trading, it will make sense to address such issues of regional stratification.

Finally, studies of the impact of quality assurance and strategic management should attend to the implications for the development of new non-faculty professions around these functions. Such growth has already occurred in the U.S. As other countries and systems adopt and adapt quality assurance and strategic management models from the U.S., to what extent will various “managerial professions” (Rhoades 1998) emerge around these functions, tapping into the opportunity structures they present and affecting the distribution of human resources in higher education systems between faculty, administrators, and non-academic professionals, as well as affecting the balance of relations between them (Rhoades and Sporn 2002)?

In closing, then, we reiterate that professionals are implicated in the quality assurance and strategic management practices that we studied. They are implicated in the implementation of these practices, and in the profusion and diffusion of these policies. The work of higher education policy scholars is part of those processes, as are the mechanisms by which we meet and disseminate our scholarship, as our own work suggests in looking at Europe and the U.S.

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