Changing university governance: On the work and impact of a new commission at a Bavarian university

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To become system-accredited, German universities undergo an external assessment of their entire quality assurance systems.[1] From personal experience as the university's former central quality management officer responsible for system accreditation (2011–2015) and drawing further on minutes of meetings and university data, I provide a retrospective historical analysis of various stages in the introduction and development of the quality management (QM) system at one Bavarian university, focussing in particular on the work of the new Presidial Commission for Quality in Degrees and Teaching (PfQ). By drawing on one model of change *(Kübler-Ross 1969),* I suggest that the institution underwent typical phases of change and illustrate how the PfQ's work in particular helped the university move from being loosely-coupled *(Weick 1976)* to becoming an institution that is now largely in alignment.

Die Universitätsgovernance verändern. Über die Arbeit und die Wirkungen einer neuen Kommission an einer bayerischen Universität

Um das Verfahren der Systemakkreditierung zu bestehen, müssen deutsche Universitäten eine externe Beurteilung ihres gesamten Qualitätssicherungssystems durchlaufen, in der alle für Studium und Lehre relevanten Strukturen und Prozesse auf das Erreichen der Qualitätsziele hin überprüft werden. Die Autorin war Qualitätsbeauftragte und zuständig für Koordination und Aufbau des Qualitätsmanagements für die Systemakkreditierung an einer bayerischen Universität. Sie unternimmt aus ihrer persönlichen Sicht auf der Basis von Dokumenten und Daten eine retrospektive historische Analyse verschiedener Stadien der Einführung und der Entwicklung von Qualitätsmanagementsystemen. Dabei erläutert sie vor allem die Arbeit einer neuen präsidialen Kommission für Qualität in Studium und Lehre. Dieser Blick in die Praxis ermöglicht das Nachvollziehen verschiedener Phasen des organisatorischen Wandels einer Universität und illustriert, wie die Kommission eine Entwicklung anstieß, welche die verbindliche Umsetzung von Qualitätszielen ermöglichte.

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[1]For English description of system accreditation see http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/index.php?id=22&L=1. Accessed 21.10.2016. See also https://www.acquin.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Guide_System_EN_ACQUIN.pdf. Accessed 20.02.1017

1   Introduction

Since the 1990s quality management and quality assurance have become standard practice in higher education and researchers have examined various aspects of the functionality of quality management in the higher education context *(Stensaker 2008; Vettori et al. (eds.) 2016),* or the functionality of particular instruments such as evaluation *(Mitterauer et al. (eds.) 2016)*. However, there remains a considerable gap in our knowledge of what actually occurs within universities when they prepare for system accreditation, a process which examines the institution's entire quality management system. If successful, an institution is then granted the right to accredit its own degree programmes. System accreditation has so far been successfully completed by 56 institutions in Germany.[2] So we may ask the following questions: What kinds of institutions are they *before* quality management systems are introduced? Does governance change during preparation for system accreditation? In which ways are faculties, central administration or university directorate affected? Is it possible to identify specific moments which might be described as tipping points when institutions undergo major advances or shifts *(Gladwell 2000)?*

Although it is possible to conduct some institutional research whilst being 'on the job', there are only few analyses of impact *(Ledermueller et al. 2016)* or case studies that have illustrated exactly how higher educational institutions (HEIs) change, and even fewer that have examined universities preparing for system accreditation (see, however, *Grendel & Rosenbusch 2010; Schmidt et al. 2016; Schorcht 2009).* This paper provides a further opportunity.

Between 2011 and 2015 I was the respective university's central quality management officer responsible for system accreditation. In a retrospective analytical narrative of change I describe the former status quo and decisions taken by the university directorate, and examine what took place when a new commission – the Presidial Commission for Quality in Teaching and Learning (hereafter PfQ) – took up office, which is the particular focus in this paper. Such a longitudinal examination from an erstwhile inside and now outside perspective provides a unique insight into the many decisions and processes that took place.

Although various models have been put forward to help explain how organizations undergo change, few address the more emotive phases of experience when stakeholders are required to alter their modes of being *(Tannenbaum/Hanna 1985)*. Within the context of grief and dying *Kübler-Ross (1969)* proposed five emotional stages in coming to terms with death. Although usually applied in other scenarios, the model has

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[2]See http://www.hs-kompass2.de/kompass/servlet/SuperXmlTabelle for list of system-accredited institutions. Accessed 27.07.2017

already provided a useful means of understanding behavior within the university context, in particular when we wish to understand phases of resistance. In her article, for example, *Zell (2003, p. 75)* used the model within the context of a Physics department experiencing great changes in core processes of teaching and research. In this paper I suggest that institutions developing quality management systems and moving towards system accreditation may undergo typical phases such as those put forward in the model, although further research will clearly need to be undertaken in other institutions before this can be verified, in particular as each institution is unique and creates its own individual quality assurance system. I conclude with lessons learned and suggest that institutions of higher education embarking on the road to system accreditation or other forms of major institutional change may benefit from analysing institutional types and forms of governance in order to understand better where they are situated before embarking on the road to such institutional development.

2   System accreditation and models of organizational theory

In German higher education there are at present two forms of accreditation: an accreditation of single (or clustered) degree courses (programme accreditation), or the accreditation of an institution's entire quality assurance system which allows it to bestow degree courses with equivalent seals of approval (system accreditation). This latter system provides greater autonomy. Whereas programme accreditation is the external checking of the maintenance of minimum quality standards at micro or subject level, system accreditation examines quality processes and assurance at *all* levels. In order to become system-accredited, therefore, the entire institution is engaged, as it needs to agree upon and then implement the *same* quality assurance instruments and mechanisms. Transparent processes in teaching and learning are required, and rigorous competence in self-assessment skills. Faculty in particular need to accept internal peer-review processes. To achieve this, they ideally need to develop and share a quality culture *(Boentert 2013; EUA 2006)*. As a form of external assessment, system accreditation is a highly complex and demanding undertaking for any higher education institution (HEI). Given the complexity of higher education processes and the number of stakeholders involved, it is a daunting task, and deciding to enter into system accreditation, as opposed to continuing with single (and less complex) programme accreditations, is a major decision. The effort involved for the whole institution can easily be underestimated.

Unless members of HEI directorates themselves come from administrative or management disciplines, many will be unfamiliar with organizational theories and there seems an ongoing disconnect between those who lead HEIs and awareness of the results of studies which can help leaders to better understand their own institutions (cf. *Bastedo (ed.) 2012, p.18; Saunders 2007).* Knowledge of organizational mechanisms

and theories can help directorates wishing to embark on major institutional change to reflect, for example, upon the strategic capability of their respective institution or determine the kind of governance which is present within their HEI at any given time *(Thoenig/Paradeise 2016).*

Numerous organizational theories exist and some can be of particular relevance to HEIs. In the corporate transformation model, for example, the focus is on staff as the capital who should be drawn upon in order to increase creativity or productivity *(Barrett 1998).* In the HEI context directorates can consider how to mobilize staff best in order to facilitate creative and innovative teaching and research. In *Torbert's* action theory *(1989/2000)*, an institution is seen as being in a continuous state of life-long learning in order to understand the present, calculate present or future risks, and remain able to act effectively and sustainably. This is relevant in higher education, which is directly linked to societal development and ongoing needs. *Beck & Cowan's* Spiral Dynamics model *(1996)* presents a form of upwards spiralling of different stages of organizational development which ultimately leads to an integral and holistic level. If we assume that institutional development will not always be moving at the same pace, then some parts of an institution may find themselves on one part of the spiral, others on another. *Cacciope & Edwards (2005)* present an eight-step synthesized theory in which institutions can be positioned in a range from Step One – crisis mentality, ad hoc management, lack of strategic management – to Step Eight, which is service- and value-oriented, supportive and caring. According to *Cohen et al.'s (1972)* 'garbage-can' model, HEIs are "organized anarchies". While this may have been particularly relevant in the 1970–1980s, many HEIs have since become less anarchic, in particular as a result of the dawn of New Public Management, although residues of anarchy may still remain. In the garbage can model, although problems and issues are identified as warranting address and are placed in the can, subsequent or *rational* action does not necessarily follow. Indeed, problems and the order in which identified problems should be addressed appear uncoupled (cf. *Cohen et al. 1972, p. 16).* This can be due to lack of engagement, failing internal communication, a lack of overall guidance in terms of institutional leadership, or a combination of all three. HEIs have also been theorized as loosely-coupled institutions *(Weick 1976, p. 3).* Here we find both rationalized and structured elements existing alongside non-rationalized, informal elements (cf*. Bastedo 2012, p. 26).* This contrasts with the 'professional bureaucracy' model, in which most decision-making is decentralized and usually determined by the faculties themselves *(Mintzberg 1980).*

The above examples are not exhaustive and merely serve to illustrate that theories can help those responsible to reflect upon their own institutions and forms of management. Arguably, a variety of organizational models may even co-exist in HEIs, depending on where one is looking (faculty; course; institutional levels) and what the above models cannot do is tell us what institutions should do to move, for example,

up or down a spiral, or what is needed to enable an institution to move from one step to another.

Any major changes in social settings are usually accompanied by some form of upset or irritation. In her model *Kübler-Ross (1969)* proposed the following typical stages:

Figure 1: Kübler-Ross Curve (visionpsychology.com)

Kübler-Ross Curve
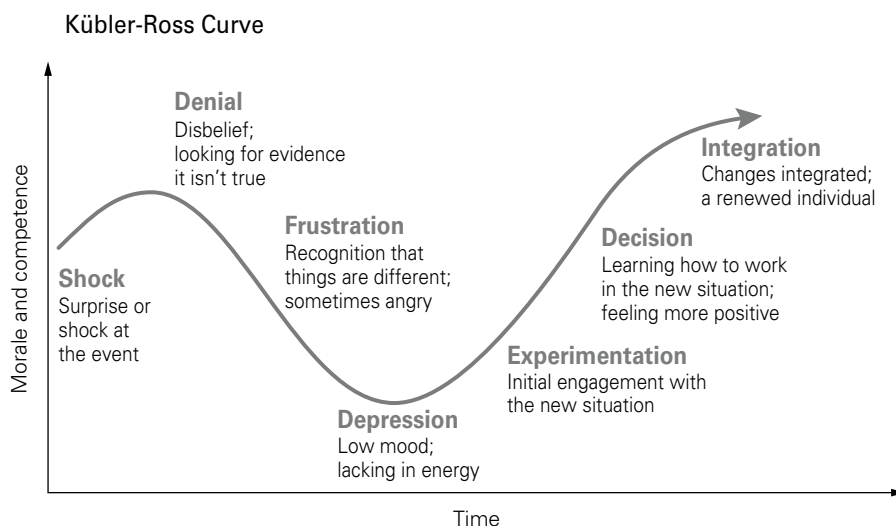
Although Kübler-Ross' model was criticized for drawing on insufficient empirical evidence *(Carpenter 1979),* and she herself accepted that the stages are not necessarily always linear or even clearly exemplified, it nonetheless provides a useful notion for examining whether an institution such as a university experiences (typical?) phases of behavior when undergoing something as fundamentally changing as the introduction of a university-wide quality assurance system as in the lead-up to system accreditation. By examining one particular university on its path to system accreditation, it is proposed that certain phases reminiscent of those displayed in the Kübler-Ross model were indeed experienced.

This paper therefore contextualizes changing higher education governance in one example: it describes the different phases of development within the institution, in particular with regard to the new commission, and secondly, it examines to what extent the overall governance of the institution changed during this period of time. To do so, it will refer firstly to the institution's history and legal background before going on to describe the phases of change and what this meant to the institution overall.

3   The University: background and legal framework

The Bavarian university at the centre of this paper is a so-called full university which offers degree programmes in all disciplines. It has a long tradition as it was founded in the Middle Ages and today its 27.000 students can look back upon a long and successful tradition. Three faculties are located in the town centre (jurisprudence, economics and Catholic theology), while medicine and dentistry are located in the university hospital. Most other faculties are situated in a modern campus above the town. The university remains at the cutting edge of science and has recently introduced innovative degree programmes such as nanotechnology, digital humanities and museology. However, like its host town, which is conservative and provides employment to a large number of civil servants, it seemed that the university seemed shy of development and innovation, a point frequently expressed by various stakeholders (personal exchanges with various administrative and faculty staff) (cf. also *Turner 2016, p. 14*). Administrative structures had essentially remained the same for decades (possibly centuries), while faculties, too, remained firmly hierarchical with strong and individualistic chairholders: the German "mandarins", as described by *Ringer* in *1969*. The university was not alone in this, as many others throughout the world were regarded at the turn of the last century as being in urgent need of reform. While some countries had already started to introduce managerialism into the higher education sector, in particular in Great Britain, a 2006 review of the 2000 Lisbon Declaration stated that there still remained a considerable need to 'modernize' universities *(Shattock 2014, p. 8)*. In many German universities, managerialism (New Public Management) was regarded with suspicion and many academic staff regarded the Bologna process in particular as an infringement on their academic freedom *(Karran 2007, p. 290)*.

At the turn of the 21st century, therefore, the university's faculties engaged in little mutual exchange on themes such as the quality of research and teaching or administrative processes, as most individual chairholders were still predominantly siloed. Its central administration, too, did not question whether its processes were particularly efficient. Although the institution was functioning, there was a notable lack of institutional identity or vision for its short or long-term development, over and above those targets which universities are obliged to set with their respective ministries.[3] Universities *are* able to function without much strategic capacity, or even lack strategic capability, and where decisions on strategy have been taken by a university directorate, these may not be disseminated to lower levels of the academic or administrative hierarchy and therefore prove ineffective *(Thoenig/Paradeise 2016, p. 298)*. A fundamental decision obliging a university to become system-accredited within a certain number of years may *in itself* bring about no initial change. It is only when the leader-

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[3] The German word for this is *Zielvereinbarung* (target agreement).

ship takes ownership of such a project or idea and ensures that communication on progress is guaranteed that real institutional change can start to occur.

In order to establish a functioning institutional quality management system, therefore, more than a decision is required. A large number of people need to be moved in the emotional and rational logic of their actions and spheres of action and not merely symbolically *(Geertz 1973).*

When the university leadership took an early decision in 2008 to become system-accredited, the university did not have a quality management system.[4] The decision in favor of system accreditation was taken for predominantly economic reasons as it was estimated that this form of accreditation would be far less than the cost of accrediting every degree programme (personal exchange with the then Chancellor).[5] By 2008 the university had only undergone a minimal number of programme accreditations, which would later be identified as a handicap, as faculties *with* accreditation experience are generally more amenable to being peer-reviewed and aspects of quality management overall.

As a Bavarian institution, the university is subject to Bavarian jurisdiction, notably the Bavarian Higher Education Law (BayHSchG). In Section B II of BayHSchG we can find information on the structure and organisation of HEIs in Bavaria, including specific definitions of the roles of various leaders, for example the president, chancellor, senate, university council and faculties, to name a few. These descriptors provide the legal framework as to how Bavarian HEIs should be managed. However, interpreting the meaning of such descriptors is not always straightforward. One example is provided by Art. 30 Paragraph 2 Subparagraphs 1–4 on the role of deans of study *(Studiendekane).* Subparagraph 4 states that the dean of study should deliver an annual anonymized report on the teaching status within the faculty to the faculty board.[6] However, deans of study are completely free in their choice of contents or structure. In the university teaching reports were, at least until they were subjected to an internal review, heterogenous and highly variable in their quality and contents, a problem that has been highlighted by research conducted into the quality of teaching reports in other Bavarian HEIs *(Sandfuchs/Stewart 2002).*

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[4] The University of Mainz was a pilot institution for the introduction of system accreditation in Germany and was accredited in early 2011.

[5] Although this is true in terms of what a university has to actually pay an external accreditation agency for single programme accreditations in contrast with an entire system accreditation, this does not take internal costs into account. Preparing a large university for system accreditation usually takes anything from between five to eight years and involves lengthy and ultimately expensive consultations throughout the entire institution.

[6] The German original legal text reads as follows „[…] dem Fakultätsrat jährlich in nicht personenbezogener Form einen Bericht zur Lehre (Lehrbericht) [erstattet]."

As a further example of legal interpretation we may examine Art. 21 Paragraph 11 BayHSchG on the role of presidents: „In cooperation with deans, the president is responsible for ensuring that professors or other persons who undertake teaching carry out their teaching and examination duties in compliance with legal obligations. Insofar he/she has both a supervisory and guiding function over the aforesaid."[7] As the highest instance of a university's quality management a Bavarian university president can therefore call to account a professor (civil servant status) who may not be fulfilling his/her duties, over and above the position of the Dean, who is otherwise responsible for his/her faculty. When faculty staff understood the meaning of this clause, they expressed concern, but later accepted this interpretation of the law (personal exchanges with faculty staff). In many cases, those in legally-determined positions of responsibility were unaware as to the extent of their powers.

4   Introducing quality management: 2008–2011

A new president was elected in 2009 shortly after the decision towards system accreditation had been taken and new areas of focus were selected for organizational development, including teaching quality, internationalisation and quality management (QM). Subsequent to the election, a planning commission soon set to work writing a mission statement *(Leitbild)* under the direction of the new President, which passed resolution in 2010.

Although the university now possessed its own *Leitbild*, it nevertheless lacked university-wide targets for how particular goals should be reached to fulfil what the *Leitbild* stated, nor had there been any overall discussion on standards, which is a premise for further organizational development. When the two central quality management officers conducted faculty meetings to discuss quality management instruments and processes, they frequently encountered reservations as staff regarded QM as a control mechanism which they believed impinged on their academic freedom and autonomy.

Although teaching evaluations were well established throughout the institution, there was no agreement or coordination on standards, questions, frequency, dissemination of results etc. An ad-hoc presidential committee, including various members of the central administration and faculties, therefore set about developing an evaluation regulation for the university *(Evaluationsordnung)*, which was officially adopted in August 2011, thereby laying the foundation for further work in establishing quality management mechanisms.

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[7] The German original legal text reads as follows: „[…]„Im Zusammenwirken mit dem Dekan oder der Dekanin trägt der Präsident oder die Präsidentin dafür Sorge, dass die Professoren und Professorinnen und die sonstigen zur Lehre verpflichteten Personen ihre Lehr- und Prüfungsverpflichtungen ordnungsgemäß erfüllen; ihm oder ihr steht insoweit gegenüber dem Dekan oder der Dekanin ein Aufsichts- und Weisungsrecht zu."

5   Expansion of quality management (2012): projects and standards

Towards the end of 2011 central quality management advised the directorate that a discussion on quality within the entire university would be an important and necessary step on the road towards system accreditation. The Vice President for Degrees and Teaching therefore called together the deans of study *(Studiendekane)* to develop quality goals for the university as these stakeholders were responsible for the quality of teaching in their respective faculties. Following a year-long consultation process, the deans of study concluded that seemingly very different faculties (e.g. physics and theology) actually had very close and shared opinions on what their understanding of quality was, far more than had been initially thought. Following a comprehensive analysis of the 15 categories in the *Leitbild* it was possible to establish four overarching quality targets: Dedication to Truth; Education and Development; the University as "universitas", and finally "Filling teaching with life". Faculties were subsequently asked to compile their own quality goals in line with these four targets.

2012 also saw additional documents being prepared to improve the evaluation of teaching by introducing standards and overarching questions, however, some areas of administration were resistant to this work as they feared faculties would not accept this administrative advance. Degree programmes had hitherto been introduced with hardly any internal or external consultation, which caused administrative bottlenecks if too many were being introduced or altered at the same time. Realising the gravity of this issue, the university directorate decided to initiate an externally-moderated project called "Degree Programme Development" to examine all of the processes surrounding the introduction and modification of degree programmes, all of which needed defining for system accreditation. A Round Table comprising degree programme coordinators and members of central administration was set up to clarify and improve the timetabling and processes of new or altered degree programmes. Meanwhile, a second university-wide project concurrently set to work to analyse processes concerning examination management. Alongside these two main projects, the university was also working on the introduction of a new campus management system. This is reminiscent of the garbage-can model, as decisions to implement large-ranging projects were being taken with no apparent rational logic and concern for timetabling or staff capacity.
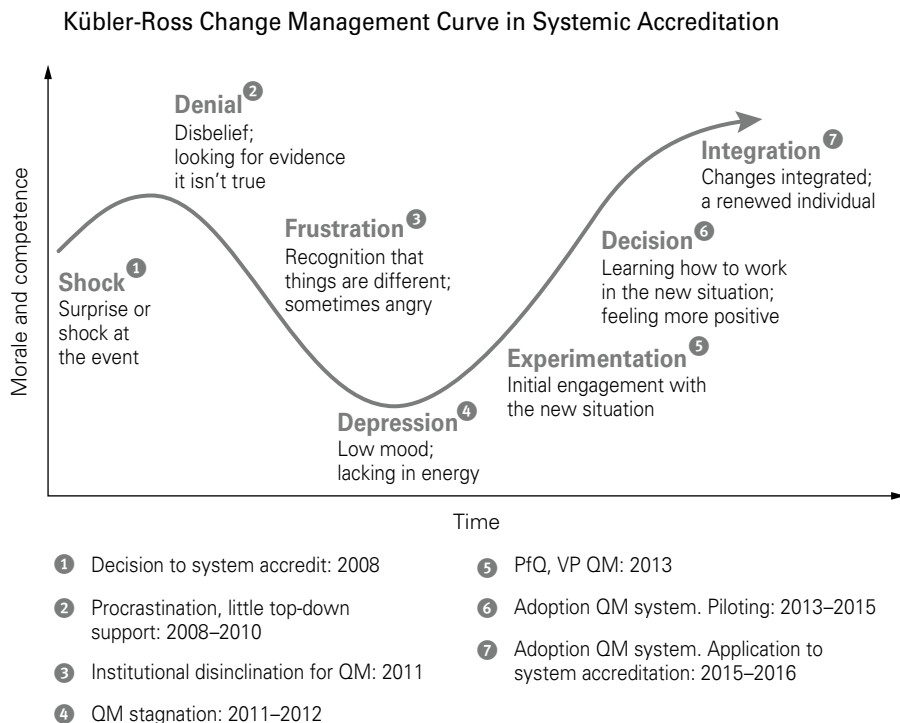
Usually it is sensible for projects of this magnitude to be conducted consecutively to reduce extra workload on key stakeholders. The fact that more than one large project was now being conducted simultaneously (e.g. degree programme development; introduction of a new campus management system *and* examination management

processes) placed all project members under extreme pressure as they had to organize participation in these projects alongside existing duties and obligations. Some key staff members were involved in all three projects and would sometimes see each other weekly in different project meetings. An advantage, however, was that many preconceptions about roles and responsibilities came under review. Many existing trenches between administrative and faculty staff were broken down as project members learnt about each other's practices *(Reckwitz 2002, p. 249–250)*. A greater sensibility for the needs, expectations and problems of others proved supportive of an understanding for quality management overall *(Becher/Trowler 2001)*.

Although the deans of study had defined university quality goals by the end of 2012, it took many more months before these were officially passed. At the time reasons for the long delay were withheld, but in retrospect it has become clear that the directorate was waiting for a new vice presidency which was being prepared for introduction at the start of the winter term 2013/2014. Meanwhile, central quality management nonetheless prepared a key document which set out the main theoretical QM model – including Deming's Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle (PDCA) – and the main evaluation instruments which would underpin all activities in the university's QM *(Kanji 1996, p. 334)*. The Deming cycle has been adopted by a large number of German higher education institutions as the model of choice for quality management as it provides an iterative four step method which is used as a means of introducing, monitoring and improving required processes *(Winde (ed.) 2010)*. The university directorate finally passed resolution on the quality goals in October 2013, concurrently with the QM model.

We can theorize that the university had already passed through four emotional stages: from initial institutional surprise and disbelief at the decision that the university was heading towards system accreditation (which was verbalized repeatedly in various faculty meetings), to a next stage of procrastination in 2008–2010 (lack of top-down support from the university directorate which itself had not yet taken ownership for the process), on to a stage of frustration (institutional resistance towards QM because of perceived infringement on academic freedom), and then through to depression (defined here as QM-stagnation 2011–2012). The next stage – experiment –, in which there was a new and concerted engagement with QM where processes were being examined, revised and tested, will be described in the next section.

Figure 2: Mirroring of Kübler-Ross Model of Change in university context (own adapted illustration)

Kübler-Ross Change Management Curve in Systemic Accreditation

1. Decision to system accredit: 2008
2. Procrastination, little top-down support: 2008–2010
3. Institutional disinclination for QM: 2011
4. QM stagnation: 2011–2012
5. PfQ, VP QM: 2013
6. Adoption QM system. Piloting: 2013–2015
7. Adoption QM system. Application to system accreditation: 2015–2016

6   The new Vice-Presidency and Presidial Commission (2013)

The decision to establish a new Vice Presidency for Quality Management and Organizational Development was taken by the university directorate independently of its central quality management officers and it therefore came as a surprise. Nonetheless, the decision was welcomed as a strong signal to the entire institution that quality management and the organizational development of the university as a whole was now being taken seriously and was fundamentally important, a fact stressed by the President at his annual receptions for administrative staff. A professor of Economics and Controlling was chosen for the task, presumably because of expertise in the fields of controlling and organizational management. Following suggestions from central QM officers, one of the first decisions the incumbent Vice President took was to establish a new Presidial Commission for Quality in Degree Programmes and Teaching (PfQ).

Initially, it was considered whether the deans of study might not automatically transfer into this commission since they had already been actively involved in quality management tasks and had worked towards establishing quality goals. However, the Vice

President decided that it would be preferable to choose fresh members from the faculties who did not otherwise hold other administrative or governance posts (no deans, no deans of study etc.). It was thought that holding other posts might prove a hindrance to being regarded as predominantly neutral within the faculty, as positions of dean, for example, are always associated with funding and other decision-making. Furthermore, those chosen should personally identify themselves with quality management issues and be willing to act as intermediaries between the university directorate, central quality management and the faculties. Some faculties were asked to propose PfQ commissioners, in other cases the new Vice President approached possible members directly if she had identified candidates who might be suitable, either through personal contact and experience, or recommendation from other members of the university directorate, for example. At this time the PfQ was made up as follows:

Table 1: Presidial Commission for Quality in Teaching and Learning

Voting Members	
Professors	10 (one per faculty)
Non-professorial academic staff	1
Students	2
Equal Opportunities Officer	1
External Vice President for Learning & Teaching	1
Non-voting Members	
Chancellor	1
Vice President for Learning & Teaching	1
Vice-President for QM & Organisational Development (Chair)	1
Central Quality Assurance Officers*	2
Total	**20**

* The central quality management officers also ran the PfQ office.

This constellation including the Chancellor did indeed prove helpful, as whenever personnel or financial questions arose, he could provide immediate answers, or else raise questions of his own.

From the outset the commission was set up as an *advisory* body, only entitled to make recommendations to the university directorate. Because the PfQ originally held monthly meetings, the university directorate became immediately far more involved with quality management issues than hitherto. This did not necessarily mean, however, that each PfQ recommendation was passed without further debate or criticism and in some cases recommendations were modified or expanded.

7   Piloting and Experimentation: 2013–2014

As a high-level commission the overarching idea of the PfQ was to support all aspects of quality in teaching and learning processes. At this stage, the PfQ was mainly involved in developmental work, addressing all manner of agenda points that were relevant to the establishment of an appropriate quality management system. This flexibility, particularly at a time where so many different organizational areas were being analysed and improved, was an advantage, although faculty and administrative members sensed that the PfQ itself was not entirely sure of its powers or precise range of duties, which to some extent was true, as this had not yet been officially determined, for example through university statute. Although the PfQ's role remained somewhat nebulous as in "something to do with quality", the whole institution was taking note of its activities and discovering that it was gaining influence on the university directorate by helping with strategic decision-making (preparation of documents in advance of becoming standards; agenda-setting for university-wide evaluations etc.).

In one of its very first meetings the PfQ made a mark by proposing that a first ever university-wide student survey be conducted in the summer term 2014 as there were still numerous knowledge gaps concerning student satisfaction and learning, a point which central QM had identified as essential to overall institutional development. As there were no personnel to design and carry out the survey within the university, the Centre for Quality Management in Mainz (ZQ) was appointed on behalf of the University to prepare and carry out the survey. A sub-committee from the PfQ was established to liaize with the ZQ.

Building on the evaluation regulation, the PfQ then worked towards establishing standards for teaching evaluations, module evaluations and degree subject evaluations. While it was necessary to negotiate individual process steps with the faculties, the PfQ also needed to analyse and suggest software to be used for the diagrammatic presentation of processes, as none had hitherto been presented visually.

In 2014 the PfQ turned its attention towards the definition of roles and duties. As already mentioned, many key university roles are defined by Bavarian higher education legislation (BayHSchG), however, they do not encompass all possible tasks within faculties. Some examples from the university are the roles of faculty degree programme coordinators, of decentralized quality officers in each faculty, or of module coordinators, to name a few. Working towards the definition and precise naming of duties revealed to PfQ members (and also the university directorate) how complex and varied some tasks were and remain. Following extensive consultation in 2014, the directorate adopted descriptors of key roles and duties, which itself was an important milestone on the road towards system accreditation, where these are a requirement for successful application.

Alongside this work, the PfQ started preparing a process descriptor for internal subject audits, which are an adaptation of external programme accreditations. It was agreed that such audits should be not only of examinatory, but also advisory nature, giving course developers content input and advice from peers from outside, but also from within the university, including staff from other affiliated faculties. To streamline such audits and other larger evaluations, faculties were asked to consider which subjects might be suitable for clustering (e.g. which subject-related degree programmes could be clustered together to be examined by a single review commission). This is a notoriously difficult area to reach consensus on as it involves aspects such as academic identity, status and hierarchy. Deciding which subjects to cluster is dependent on respective subject cultures and traditions, which may not be externally apparent *(Becher/Trowler 2001)*. Any online analysis of the location of degree programmes in faculties in Germany (or abroad) will reveal a variety of constellations. Although possible clusters were discussed in the PfQ, it was therefore unsurprising that agreement could not be reached at this stage.

One faculty in which clustering was straightforward was asked to be a pilot for an internal subject audit. Central quality management prepared and accompanied the process, in addition to organizing external peers. In this case, faculty members had no previous experience of external accreditations. Some faculty staff members did not accept process blips in the pilot audit easily as they wished to perform exceptionally well and get everything right immediately, which, although highly commendable, is somewhat idealistic when a process is being piloted. Fortunately, the results of the first subject audit were of benefit to the faculty, which smoothed ruffled feathers. Areas for future development or modification were identified, while the pilot also distinguished which parts of the audit process itself needed modification.

The adoption of the Deming principle as the university's underlying QM theoretical model has already been mentioned. One PDCA issue was that feedback loops (here: check and act), even within the PfQ, were not always watertight, as some PfQ information was not necessarily being communicated properly to respective faculties and vice versa. This was a point in which greater connectivity between check and act phases needed to be reached and was an indication of the need to maintain feedback loops in the work conducted by commissions overall. In the past, for example, the university directorate had taken decisions, but these were not always disseminated or even acted upon. Follow-up mechanisms therefore needed consideration in PDCA processes to ensure closure of feedback loops.

Overall, this was a time of piloting and experimentation in which the PfQ's role was becoming clearer and more accepted within the university as QM and its instruments were steadily becoming standard practice, equivalent with stage six in the model.

8   Adopting the QM system (2015)

The subject audit process as a vital part of the QM system was reviewed extensively following the first pilot. All aspects of the process, in particular internal communication paths, were checked by faculty members, external reviewers and central quality management officers alike. In keeping with the PDCA principle, problems were discussed with relevant stakeholders, solutions sought and found, and a revised audit process established. The external peers were particularly helpful here as numerous suggestions for revisions in the process originated from them. The revised audit process was then forwarded to the PfQ for consultation, which in turn recommended changes to the university directorate.

Today, the new subject audit incorporates criteria which were hitherto part of usual programme accreditations and it also includes an obligatory meeting between the auditors and the university directorate, which was not part of the first pilot. Furthermore, it delves more deeply into matters of content than do normal programme accreditations. Recommendations have now been officially transferred into the quality management system and other audits have since been carried out using the new process. The PfQ is involved in each audit and suggests recommendations and conditions for change. Internal certification can be granted once the degree programme has completed a nine-year-cycle of degree programme evaluation and subject audit. New degree programmes are granted internal accreditation before students can enroll. Thereafter, they are timetabled for re-certification within the obligatory nine-year period. The Vice President for Quality Management and Organizational Development is the certification-granting body within the university, acting on behalf of the President.

In 2015 a further PfQ focus which proved particularly challenging and laborious related to the content and design of teaching reports, which faculties, as already mentioned, are required to produce on an annual basis (cf. BayHSchG)[8]. Teaching reports should ideally be written according to a set standard, thereby enabling stakeholders to identify targets, achievements and problems over time. A first sub-committee of the PfQ failed to reach a consensus on either content or structure, which obliged the entire PfQ to readdress the issue, finally reaching consensus after more consultation.

The PfQ now dedicates one of its annual meetings to the teaching reports and makes recommendations to the university directorate accordingly. The Vice President for

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[8]Deans of Study are responsible for teaching reports (Art. 30 BayHSchG). Paragraph 3 states: „[1]The teaching report should describe the situation of teaching and degree programmes. It should also describe the respective implementation of teaching targets.[2]The teaching report also contains for the relevant duration details about the student assessment of teaching provision in the individual degree programmes, on occasion and where relevant with regard to external assessments." (own translation)

Learning and Teaching uses the teaching reports and the PfQ's recommendations as the basis for subsequent individual faculty meetings. This gives faculties a personal opportunity to discuss which aspects of their work they wish to prioritize in a given academic year and they can use the teaching reports as means for arguing for needed changes or improvements. The personal meetings with the Vice President also reveal a far closer relationship between the university directorate and the faculties, who appreciate this increased engagement. Furthermore, they provide an ongoing record for faculties over time (student cohort developments etc.).

Following completion of the work on the teaching reports in 2015 the PfQ recommended a university-wide survey on satisfaction among teaching staff as an institutional adjunct to the student survey conducted in 2014. This was also prepared by a PfQ sub-committee together with an external evaluation provider. Furthermore, the PfQ and central QM finished compiling the documentation required for the application for system accreditation, a process which the selected accreditation agency opened in October 2015.

From its inception in January 2013 until submission of the application for system accreditation in 2015, the PfQ was operative in both advisory and developmental capacities. It provided recommendations which were developed iteratively under participation of respective stakeholders throughout the university. Some tasks could not be immediately solved and needed further review or feedback from faculties or administrative staff. In some cases this was frustrating, but nonetheless integral to the development of an appropriate and functioning quality management system which would be accepted by the entire university community. By including key members of the university directorate, the importance of quality management was underlined and became integral to the work conducted by the university directorate. The signature on an internal audit certificate now bears witness to the fact that many levels in the academic hierarchy have been involved, from decentralized faculty quality officers looking at individual evaluation results and supplying ideas for development at local level to deans of study writing their annual reports on the quality of teaching on up to the PfQ, which finally assesses teaching and audit reports and puts forward recommendations for change. We can see that by 2015 the PfQ had become an integral part of the university's structure, the QM system was in place and being applied.

9   Lessons learned, future perspectives

The demands upon higher education in Germany have, as elsewhere, increased with growing student numbers, the modularization of degree programmes, a lack of funding in comparison to other countries, and a greater need for transparency and accountability. German ministers of science and education wish their respective universities

to become increasingly individualistic and competitive *(Kehm 2014, pp. 30–32),* however, federal state laws provide university presidents (or rectors) with greater or lesser leverage to improve the status and functionality of their respective institutions. As elsewhere, New Public Management (NPM) has entered the German higher education arena to improve the governance of its institutions. However, for governance to improve, university directorates need to be professional in their actions. It can be argued that the PfQ played a key role in this capacity and helped the university overall to improve its governance mechanisms. The following table suggests where the university was positioned in 2009 before the introduction of QM and the PfQ, to where it stood towards the end of 2015:

Table 2: Changes within the depicted university

2009	2015
Leadership	
– Strategic deficits	– Quality targets, goals
– Lack of engagement (with QM)	– Engagement, clear organization and purpose
– Weak communication	– Institutionalised exchange
– No Leitbild	– Leitbild
Process	
– Poor or no standards (e.g. in evaluations)	– Standards, benchmarking, definitions
– Absence of feedback loops	– Feedback loops for QM
– Unclear processes	– Clarified, revised processes
– Undefined roles and tasks	– Defined roles and tasks
– Non-standardised documentation	– Standardised documentation e.g. teaching/ audit reports
– Conservatism; traditional hierarchies	– Reforms in administrative & faculty processes
Results	
– Lack of institutional knowledge	– University-wide surveys & analyses
– Poor monitoring	– Establishment of monitoring framework
– Heterogenous teaching reports	– Homogenous teaching reports
– No faculty meetings by VP Learning & Teaching	– Annual faculty meetings by VP Learning & Teaching
– Lack of QM	– Institutionalized QM
– Unclear subject identities	– Establishment of subject clusters

The changes are noteworthy and reveal considerable institutional transformation in the years 2011–2015, which notably picked up pace in the two years following the inauguration of the new Vice President for Quality Assurance and Organizational Development and the PfQ in particular. The illustration suggests that what was formerly a loosely coupled institution in 2009, relying on existing (unexamined) processes and organizational structures, with a lack of communication and exchange, at all levels, has

now largely become aligned and holistic, with the PfQ an essential ingredient in the QM instrumental mix.

Following its introduction in 2013 the PfQ started impacting on numerous areas of university governance, at directorate level and further down the academic hierarchy by clarifying roles, tasks and improving standards and processes. PfQ members, too, were able to define their own role and place within the institution and their particular role within the quality management system, for example by reading and analysing annual teaching and audit reports. While the PfQ's role was more developmental at the outset, its main task now is to ensure that *institutionalized* QM continues to work well. The (online) provision of documents, standards and process descriptors have led to improved communication throughout the university. Roles, duties and even faculty identities have become transparent, which has also helped raise the status of those involved, as the breadth of their tasks has become clear. Feedback loops have been established and reporting and monitoring secured, including the direct participation of the university directorate, thereby increasing overall awareness of normal faculty business, needs, and problems and successes.

Although the commission began its life without any *official* regulation other than simply being a 'presidential commission', its work has been accepted as key to university QM processes in teaching and learning. It is presently proposed that the PfQ be taken up by the university's own charter, so that it becomes institutionally fixed. The PfQ will remain responsible for providing the university directorate with input for university-wide surveys, when necessary, and help to ensure that transitions in the university directorate do not cause stagnation in the university's ongoing development. The PfQ will have become an enduring institutional assistant on which any directorate can depend.

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