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What do values mean for QA in Europe?

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Fundamental values in European HE

Understanding of values in European HE before 1945

- Emergence of Academic freedom as a basic individual right
 - Enlightenment
 - Humboldt: *Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit*
 - US universities, UK universities
- Institutional autonomy limited (exception UK); strong government and in some countries religious intervention in inner affairs of HEIs
- No participation of students and non-professorial staff in institutional governance
- Duty of HE to society core value, but public responsibility for HE at best implicit



Significant changes affecting HE in Europe after 1950s, including:

- Massification of higher education
- Increasing (inflation+) costs of HE/Increasing public and private investments in HE
- Democratization of university governance (1960s)
- New Public Management ideas in HE governance (1990s)
- Link of HE to knowledge society/economy
- Link of HE to innovation (esp. in private sector)
- Fall of communism in CEE and many CEE countries joining the EU
- Establishment of European Higher Education Area (EHEA)
- Use of digital technologies (before and after pandemic)
- Worries about AI
- Etc etc

Why were values marginalized in HE in Europe?

HE reforms since 1980s focusing on:

- Governance
 - ‘Autonomy and quality’; ‘Freedom and excellence’
 - Conditional institutional autonomy
 - From collegial to executive institutional leadership/management
- Funding
 - From earmarked to basic grants
 - From input to output funding
 - Performance based funding /performance agreements

Instrumentalization of HE Reform agendas

1. Institutional autonomy a political/administrative instrument, not a value
2. HE quality linked to (one-sided) interpretation of societies' needs
3. Fundamental values 'taken for granted' in reforms
4. Reform documents gave little attention to academic freedom, and the contributions of higher education institutions to the development of, "democratic citizens, a humanistic culture, social cohesion and solidarity, and a vivid public sphere" (Olsen & Maassen, 2007: 9).

Why the current focus on Values in HE?

Impact of HE reforms

Marginalization of fundamental values in HEIs(?)

Response: Worries within and outside the academic community about

- *de jure* and *de facto* state of play of academic freedom
- (possible) tensions between institutional autonomy and self-governance
- imbalance between executive and democratic principles in institutional leadership and governance
- commercialization and commodification of HE (and science)
- decreasing public trust in HE (and science),
- the impact of political extremism in liberal democracies and the infringement of fundamental values in HE by ‘illiberal democratic regimes’

Quality assessment and values in European HE

Mapping the current situation

- Study by Daniela Crăciun/CEU for European Council

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

- Values not covered



European Higher Education Area

- Situation wrt fundamental values deteriorating in some EHEA countries (Academic Freedom index 2021)
- Growing gap between *de jure* and *de facto* state of play of fundamental values in some EHEA countries
- How can Quality Assessment contribute to achieving ambitions expressed in Rome Communique?

Quality assessment and values in European HE (cont.)

EU – EHEA connection in monitoring fundamental values in HE?

- European Commission: developing AF monitor with member states
- European Parliament / STOA Panel: developing AF monitor AF with academic community

- EHEA: ?



Challenges for enhancing incorporation of fundamental values in QA:

- Far-reaching variations among EU/EHEA countries in references to fundamental values in national HE legislation
- Lack of a common understanding in Europe about definitions & interpretations of fundamental values in HE
- Interpretation of fundamental values in HE context-bound?

Quality assessment and values in European HE

(cont.)

Possible way forward:

- Promote common understanding in all EU/EHEA countries of basic dimensions (minimum conditions for?) fundamental values in HE
- Strengthen EU-level and national legal protection of fundamental values in HE
- Review and adapt the ESG fundamentally
- Incorporate lessons from Covid-19 pandemic
- Incorporate the academic responsibility for strengthening democratic principles and institutions, realizing the SDGs, finding solutions for grand societal challenges (in public and private organisations)
- Develop 'fundamental value indicators' aot on basis of Academic freedom monitors, indexes, studies
- Develop a European level Platform for Academic Freedom