

INTRODUCTION OF SYSTEMIC QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SLOVENIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract – *The paper aims to describe some characteristics of Slovenian higher education and the new endeavour to establish a quality higher education system. A draft plan for gradually introducing a system of quality assurance has been developed on the basis of foreign experiences, with due attention being given to national circumstances and particularities. Higher education in Slovenia comprises two universities, the University of Ljubljana and the University of Maribor, together with some free-standing higher education institutions. In such a small higher education system, a key challenge is the introduction of flexible quality assurance mechanisms which can be implemented without too great a difficulty. The evaluation process is to be supported by research and development work from the very start. It will include continual development of evaluation methodology and procedures, as well as an analysis of the institutional effects of quality assurance.*

Introduction

Public interest in higher education quality is rising throughout the world. The main reasons for the increased attention paid to the problem of quality in higher education are the expansion and diversification of higher education systems, competitiveness among national economies, and a general trend towards decentralisation of higher education. Added to these are movements towards institutional autonomy and the internationalisation of higher education.

For Slovene higher education to be well prepared to compete and co-operate with higher education all over Europe and other parts of the world, it must prove its quality at the international level. Due to the present trends of internationalisation, it is necessary to establish a higher education system that will be comparable with other systems. In Slovenia, the heritage of the University's past will have to be considered in great detail during the establishment of such a system. This heritage has, at least over the past fifty years, many characteristics in common with the conditions in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Cerych 1990). However, this history also displays certain specific national traits.

Heritage

The small higher education system in Slovenia has recently developed in a very new country and is still undergoing change. Currently it has two universities and seven free-standing higher education institutions. The University of Ljubljana has a longer tradition and consists of twenty-five highly diversified faculties, art academies and professional higher education schools. It was established in 1919 following the pattern of central European universities from the end of the 19th century. The University of Maribor had been developing from individual higher education institutions for twenty years before it was founded in 1975. It consists of eleven member institutions.

After World War II Slovenian higher education was part of the former, very decentralised Yugoslavian higher education system. It was designed according to the policy of 'real socialism' which included a number of reforms. Since then, there have been ten laws passed regarding universities. The result of all the enforced reforms of the Yugoslavian era was the disintegration of the university into isolated parts with very little co-operation and communication among the schools. The university wielded less power and authority in comparison with individual faculties during those times. Also, the funding was dispersed over the entire educational apparatus. At the university level there were no instruments for supervision or strategic management in place and policy-making with planning was often non-existent. The quality of work and the autonomy of the university were especially badly damaged by the Career-Oriented Education Act, which was passed in 1980. This covered both higher and secondary education. The law reduced higher education to granting a qualification for a vocation in a system of artificial manpower planning. The idea of simultaneous education for work and further education (for profession and scientific work) 'unified' the goals of all the higher education institutions of the university and non-university type.

There are a number of key developments and factors that characterise the post-war period, and which exercised an important influence on the quality of university education in Slovenia. I set these out schematically in the following section, before I consider the present situation.

- After the Second World War, the state founded independent research institutes. As a result, the university function of teaching and learning within numerous disciplines was separated from the basic, theoretical forms of scientific and research work. The university carried out its function of transmitting existing knowledge to new generations, but its creative output continually declined. The principal task of the university became vocational education, while scientific research work stagnated. Consequently, the educational level of the university

was impoverished. At the university, service and teaching orientations predominated. Individuals and smaller groups did scientific work within its framework, nurturing academic excellence and attaining top-level achievements, but because of the prevalence of pragmatic mediocrity, they fell into isolation. This led to professional and social exclusivity disconnected from social events.

- The disintegration of the university into isolated parts led to very low levels of co-operation and communication. Heterogeneity and the further fragmentation of the university enabled the political forces to manipulate the higher education sector. The university, for instance, had uniform state standards enforced upon it, and these did not correspond to the nature of academic work, and failed to consider the extreme heterogeneity of the university, the nature of certain disciplines and the historical creation of individual institutions as well. The state's emphasis was on efficiency, not quality.
- These pressures led to the break-up of academic studies into various levels: less demanding two- or three-year study programmes which are essentially of the non-university type, and the more demanding academic programmes. That legacy still prevails. Presently, for instance, approximately a quarter of the programmes at the University of Ljubljana are of a non-university level.
- As the research findings of a number of university scholars during this period suggest (Marentic Pozarnik 1989; Mihevc, Marentic Pozarnik 1992), the quality of university freshmen fell drastically after the adoption of the Career-Oriented Education Act, which abolished grammar schools.
- What can be referred to as 'negative selection' became a common policy in procedures of academic 'habilitation', where staff were engaged on the basis of political suitability or loyalty, rather than on the basis of academic ability.
- Study programmes were inflexible, crammed and obsolete. Research surveys carried out with students and graduates (Stergar 1988; Ule and Miheljak 1989; Kump 1990, 1994) showed the extent to which universities were failing in a number of key areas associated with quality provision. Students, for instance, declared that they were not being given enough opportunities to work independently, that the relations between teachers and learners left a lot to be desired, that more modern forms of assessing knowledge should be introduced, and that study programmes had to be modernised and the methods of teaching improved.

- The post-war period was also characterised by an absence of internal institutional mechanisms for ensuring the quality of university work. Under the previous law, assessment of the quality of education was mentioned in the article which determined that educational institutions were obliged to report annually on the efficiency of their work and management to the government department of education. The law specified the data such an analysis was to contain, but the university, which was obliged to create a uniform methodology, did not develop uniform indicators. The analysis did not have direct financial consequences. After 1989, when a number of changes and amendments to the law brought about increased freedom to the universities, many higher education institutions did not send such analyses to the government any more.

Despite expected problems (including a resistance to change, the traditional hallmark of academic institutions) and despite the weight of the heritage of the past, the Slovenian higher education sector will necessarily have to confront and deal with the issue of quality provision. It thus faces the challenge of developing quality assurance and assessment mechanisms that are responsive and sensitive to its particular historical, cultural and political context. Failing that, there is a risk that the former regime of political control of the university will be replaced by another regime: instrumental control.

Recent developments

The higher education system took off in a new direction in 1991, when the Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the declaration of independence from the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, based on a previously held referendum in which more than 93% of the voters declared themselves in favour of Slovenian independence.

In December 1993 the Slovenian parliament passed a new Higher Education Act which introduced far-reaching changes. The most important of these concerns the external diversification of the higher education system (i.e. non-university sector). These changes assured the autonomy of the higher education institutions and encouraged competition by the establishment of private institutions. An important new element is 'matura' as a form of external student assessment after a four year cycle of secondary school education. It is required for admission to undergraduate study programmes leading to a university degree, while a final examination is sufficient for enrollment into professional higher education programmes.

In the new legislation special attention has been paid to systemic development of higher education quality (Zgaga, Jurkovic, 1995). The Council for Higher Education, which is the consultative body of the government, is made up of the representatives of higher education institutions together with other experts, and its task is to define the criteria for the assessment and evaluation of quality and efficiency of teaching, research, artistic and expert work. It is also the state body which accredits new higher education institutions. When higher education institutions adopt new study programmes or award titles to teaching and research staff, they must first get the approval of the Council. The Higher Education Quality Assessment Committee has recently been established and appointed by the higher education institutions themselves. It will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the quality of higher education at the national level. The criteria for the assessment of quality and efficiency in higher education will be defined by the Council for Higher Education in co-operation with the Higher Education Quality Assessment Committee. The Committee's brief is to act in accordance with the rules determined in co-operation with the senates of institutions of higher education, and in accordance with the criteria determined by the Council for Higher Education and the Council for Science and Technology. A copy of the Committee's annual report, which must be published, must be submitted to the senates of institutions of higher education, to the Council for Higher Education, and to the Council for Science and Technology.

In the framework of the research project *Evaluation of Higher Education*, which is financed by the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Education and Sport, a draft plan for introducing a system of quality assurance in Slovenian higher education has been prepared. The draft plan was first discussed by members of a specially appointed working group, and subsequently by members of the Council for Higher Education.

Premises and objectives of quality assurance

The proposed system of national quality assurance has drawn on elements that are common in other national systems such as Britain, Denmark, France, and the Netherlands (Van Vught and Westerheijden 1993; Westerheijden et al. 1994; Neave 1994). Such elements are: the setting up of a meta-level co-ordinating body, self-evaluations undertaken within institutions, external peer review, publication of reports, and an indirect link to funding. These common elements form a basis for setting out a general international model that will in the future provide comparative quality assurance of higher education systems and recognition of academic qualifications gained throughout Europe (EC-C 1993; Brennan and van Vught 1993; Vroeijenstijn 1995).

The reasons for developing the Slovenian national quality assurance system based on these common elements are presumably the wish to learn from the experience of other higher education systems, and the need to promote the international recognition of Slovenian higher education. The premises for establishing a Slovenian system of quality assurance are thus foreign experiences, adapted to national circumstances and the particularities of the local higher education sector. The system, which will be introduced gradually, intends to be flexible, feasible, and general enough to be able to be adapted to different institutional and disciplinary contexts, while at the same time preserving its basic structure.

The main objectives of quality assurance in Slovenian higher education are international comparability, increased responsibility, improvement, and the self-regulation of the higher education sector. As has already been noted above, Slovenian higher education has been under central state control for over half a century. Because an effective quality assurance system implies autonomy (Clark 1983; Becher and Kogan 1991), it is very important to guarantee the independence of higher education institutions, and to replace the tradition of political control with an a new ethos, that of academic control and responsibility.

Due to the internationalisation of higher education, and the increasing levels of mobility of students, teachers, and researchers, a need is growing for an information system on higher education research, and on understanding national and international trends. Consequently, there is a need for outlining the equivalence of qualifications and standards in different higher education systems. For this reason, one of the chief objectives of the quality assurance system is the establishment of international equivalence and comparability of Slovenian higher education.

Institutions of higher education (universities, faculties, academies of art and higher professional schools) are responsible to the wider public (for example, tax-payers, students, employers, professional associations) for the quality of their work (Barnett 1992; Harvey et al. 1992; Vroeiijstijn 1995). Responsibility for quality carries with it the implication that institutions of higher education introduce internal systems for quality assurance through which they are capable of demonstrating to the wider public the methods that have been adopted in the pursuit and achievement of their goals. A question arises of how to design a suitable mechanism that would co-ordinate the higher education system's responsibility to the public whilst retaining institutional autonomy. Historical experiences show that forceful interventions by the state have always had destructive consequences, causing malfunctioning of the university as a social institution (Kump 1994).

The dominance of extrinsic values, such as responsibility and relevance, over intrinsic values, such as searching for truth and the pursuit of knowledge, may lead to excessive intellectual servility, and subsequently to academic servility. The paradoxical consequence of governmental agencies' efforts to promote the evaluation of quality of higher education activities has, in many aspects, led to a fall in this quality, since more and more energy has been put into writing bureaucratic reports, while higher education activities have adapted to trends towards simplified quantification of results (Frazer 1993; Trow, 1994).

Quality can therefore be threatened by state interventions, and a measure of autonomy has historically been associated with the work of universities (Neave and van Vught 1991; Trow, 1994). Autonomy of the higher education system is therefore necessary if the goal is quality provision. Higher education may meet the requirements for responsibility to society only by supervising academic standards in all disciplines and through maintenance and improvement of the quality of work in all institutions of higher learning. In this way, the higher education system will be able to protect its relative and variable autonomy. For this reason, and as international experience in this field has shown, institutions of higher education should develop internal systems of maintenance and improvement of work quality, and, by following international education standards, they should design their own standards and procedures for testing and assuring quality of teaching and research, which would be derived directly from the criteria of intellectual work. For quality control to be efficient, it will be necessary to develop a culture that looks upon the continuous improvement of quality as a way of life. Teachers in higher education and other higher education workers should understand and accept self-evaluation as part of their normal activities, and as an integral part of the reflected academic process. The crucial element in successfully introducing a mechanism for quality assurance is personal motivation, which also plays the most important role in introducing new elements, that is, in updating study programmes.

Since assurance and quality supervision are constituent parts of the reform process and of the development and modernisation of higher education, self-evaluation and collegial supervision should contribute both to more efficient planning, as well as to the renovation of institutions of higher education. There is a preference for systematic, structured and on-going self-regulating strategies rather than for the establishment of external, state-governed supervision control and regulation. Towards this end, it is planned that the key instrument for quality assurance will be triangular quality evaluation carried out by means of self-evaluation, peer review and institutional audits.

The process of evaluation and self-evaluation

The process of evaluation will consist of a combination of organisational and disciplinary approaches. Since the quality of research groups and projects is already undergoing evaluation (MZT 1995), the initial phase of the evaluation will focus on the field of teaching and learning, while the process of evaluating education will observe the link between teaching and research.

A disciplinary approach will initially be carried out on the programme level (within specific disciplines or departments) following the self-evaluation method, which will be supported with data and combined with the method of peer review, or with the opinions of (foreign) experts in individual fields. The organisational approach will be at the level of the institution of higher education, which will introduce the method of visits of external experts in higher education quality, and experts in educational processes and programmes. This evaluation will not be aimed at the contents of the programme, but at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of students, and the credibility of the self-evaluation procedures. Additionally, the efficiency of the mechanism for quality assurance of higher education activities will be examined occasionally by using the method of institutional audits (that is, visits by external domestic and foreign experts in higher education quality).

Internal quality control will thus be supplemented with external evaluation. The crucial link between the external evaluation and internal quality assurance will be self-evaluation, which will be presented to the external expert committee by the institution of higher education.

The method and course of self-evaluation will be determined by the institutions of higher education themselves. However, in order to facilitate the work of the external expert committee, certain common guidelines will be adopted (the use of a guidebook with instructions), regulating the form and contents of self-evaluation which must be observed by all institutions of higher education. Attention will be drawn to the inputs, contents, context, and to the educational process and outcomes. The self-evaluation will include a description and critical analysis of the following aspects of programmes:

- *Programme objectives*, i.e. compliance of objectives with the institutional mission, achievement of objectives, acquainting higher education teachers and students with purposes and objectives.
- *Programme description*, i.e. the formal and organisational structure of the programme (for example, forms of study, progression and completion, duration of the programme, professional titles, further education of graduates).

- *Conceptual programme structure*, i.e. the relation between the core of the programme and optional subjects, the balance of general and specialised programme contents, the relation between theoretical and practical training.
- *Student issues*, i.e. strategies for passing information to candidates, enrolment policy, selection mechanisms, the monitoring of student progression, the level of study load imposed on students, student fluctuation.
- *Consulting and advising students*, i.e. strategies for consulting and advising, the introduction to studies, mentorship, study guidance, acquainting students with different study techniques and job-searching techniques, supervision of students' learning difficulties.
- *Higher education teachers and other staff*, i.e. recruitment, promotion and mobility of staff, relations between teaching and research, the input of external domestic and foreign lecturers, programmes for specialisation of teachers and other workers, staff development, assisting new lecturers in adapting to the new environment.
- *Facilities, equipment, and study accessories*, i.e. condition and suitability of facilities, access to information technology and other teaching accessories and equipment necessary for the implementation of the programme.
- *Teaching, learning, and student assessment*, i.e. methods and strategies of teaching in relation to the purposes and objectives of the programme, the relation between education and research, methods and forms of assessing and evaluating of student knowledge, care for the intellectual and personal development of students, development of general and transferable skills, assistance in the process of independent learning.
- *Graduates*, i.e. the expected and actual qualifications of graduates, employment capability, contacts with former students, contacts with prospective employers, definition of jobs, modification of professional profiles, type and extent of further education of graduates.
- *Internal quality assurance*, i.e. the continual maintenance and improvement of quality through the regular and systematic monitoring of the implementation and evaluation of the programme, through mechanisms for collecting feedback (from students, graduates, employers, professional associations), and through the ongoing process of updating and improvement of programmes.

- *External relations*, i.e. international co-operation and exchange of students and teachers, links with industry, the business world, the public services; co-operation with non-higher education research institutions and the private sector, co-operation with other research and educational institutions both inside the country and abroad.

One aspect of the quality assurance programme that, given the small size of the Slovenian higher education system, is bound to be problematic, is the constitution of a group of external experts who will monitor the evaluation of institutions. In many cases there is only one centre of higher education in a particular discipline, and it therefore proves difficult to evaluate colleagues objectively in the framework of a specific discipline where everybody knows everybody else. It will therefore be necessary to engage experts from other countries, and to combine these with national experts in order to ensure sufficient understanding of the educational-political premises within which the study programmes function, and to avoid feelings of frustration that are bound to prevail when scholars are monitored by a group made up exclusively of foreign consultants (Thune 1994). The group of experts will have the task of evaluating the extent to which institutions have implemented the purposes and objectives they set out for themselves. Within this procedure, the group of experts will take care to consider the particular nature and specific circumstances relevant to the institution, but ultimately, it is only through such external peer review that an institution's self-evaluation reports can be considered valid and credible.

Institutional quality audit will focus on the evaluation process, that is, on internal systems and procedures that assure quality. Its scope of work will not be aimed at quality itself, but at introducing mechanisms for quality assurance, because quality of education can only be assessed at subject level. Since the purposes, objectives and the nature of institutions of higher education and programmes are very different, absolute criteria of quality would be inappropriate. For this reason, standards will be derived from the institutional mission and from the purposes and objectives of individual programmes. The evaluation of the quality of programmes will be descriptive, since it will provide more approximate information, unlike the evaluation expressed in one word or in numeric signifiers as part of a classification scale.

Process of gradual introduction of self-evaluation

The preparations for gradual introduction of self-evaluation in Slovene higher education was started in autumn 1996 with the experimental phase of

self-evaluation of some study programmes and institutions of higher education which decided to participate on a voluntary basis. Methodological instructions were prepared for this purpose in the frame of the project *Evaluation of Higher Education* (Kump 1995).

After this experimental phase, one should be in a better position to analyse whether the proposed quality assurance system will work according to the expectations and initial goals, and there will be an opportunity to modify the first plan. On this basis, it will be possible to carry out a gradual transition to self-evaluation as a regular element in the functioning of institutions of higher education, to which common rules and procedures will be applied, and which will later on be developed within an integral system. In this connection it will be necessary to determine the frequency with which the entire Slovenian higher education system is evaluated: the practice in a number of foreign university systems is five to six years. The time schedule must be based on realistic expectations and the estimation of the period of time in which it will be possible to carry out quality assessment of all higher education programmes. The self-evaluation process, from the planning phase to the phase of visits by external experts, is estimated to last one year. Approximately two months would be available for self-evaluation report examinations, while visits by external experts would last three to four days, as in similar approaches abroad. Institutional audits would be carried out periodically, for example, every six years. The sequence in individual institutions and of programmes, will have to be determined subsequently. In cases of experimental programmes or acute problems in existing programmes, the possibility of *ad hoc* evaluation will be included.

Bodies involved in the evaluation process

At the system level, the evaluation process will include members of the Committee for Higher Education Quality, experts in the field of the functioning of quality assurance systems, and experts in the field of educational processes and programmes. At the level of institutions of higher education, the management and members appointed to self-evaluation groups will be responsible for the course and success of the evaluation process. At the level of departments, (that is, programmes) the self-evaluation process will include (foreign) experts in individual disciplinary fields and teachers in higher education. It will also be necessary to set out a method of including feedback from users (students, graduates, employers, professional associations) in the evaluation process.

The management and self-evaluation groups in the institutions of higher education will be responsible for drawing up self-evaluation reports, while the Committee for Higher Education Quality will be responsible for the preparation of the final annual report by external experts in higher education quality, as determined by law.

The main result of the evaluation process will be the final report, including evaluation supported with evidence. The final report will be drafted by members of the Committee for Quality and external experts on the basis of the self-evaluation report, as well as on the basis of impressions obtained during the visit to the institution, or observation of an individual programme.

The final report will include an analysis of strengths and weaknesses with proposals and recommendations for quality improvement. The report will not judge or rank institutions or programmes, but will rather encourage institutional changes, thus serving to support the process of quality improvement of the institutions and programmes under observation. The self-evaluation report, which will include an evaluation by experts in different fields, will be confidential, submitted only to the co-ordinator of the evaluation process and the institution of higher education, representing support for its plans for quality improvement. The final report will be published, in order to provide the public (particularly potential students and employers) about the quality of individual programmes and institutions of higher education.

Evaluation and financing

Several experts point out that no direct connection should be allowed between the evaluation results and decision-making on financing of higher education activities (Kells 1992; van Vught and Westerheijden 1993). They argue that a direct link to funding undermines quality improvement purposes. Rigid relations between evaluation reports and financial decisions would lead to additional money for a good mark, while a bad mark would result in lower funding. Such relations would harm the operation of the evaluation system, since it would concentrate merely on satisfying external requirements and seeking weaknesses, which would lead to promotion of negative sanctions instead of improvement of quality.

Therefore, if a link is to be established between quality assurance and higher education financing, it should support the innovations designed to lead to improvement.

Effects of evaluation and the role of research within the evaluation process

The effects and influence of the evaluation process on higher education quality can only be determined over a long time period. It will therefore be necessary to introduce systematic supervision of the methods used, analysis of the effects of evaluation, and continual development of evaluation methodology and procedures. Research work is an important constituent part of the evaluation process from the very beginning: it includes a description of institutional (systemic) characteristics of the environment in which the evaluation is being introduced; research also contributes to the selection and application of the model which is the most suitable for the determined characteristics, defines possible influences and changes, and so on. To be effective, research into the operation and impact of the evaluation process should be included at all the different phases: from the planning phase and information collection, through reflection and consent, to evaluation, reformulation, planning of changes and improvement of evaluation procedures.

Institutional and organisational support

The successful implementation of the quality assurance system also requires the introduction of a national meta-agency, which should be constituted by all institutions of higher education in agreement with the government. The operation of this agency should be included in the national higher education programme as an activity necessary for development, and for the promotion of efficiency within the higher education system. The agency would be given the role of an independent and neutral professional body, while its tasks would chiefly be the following:

- co-ordination of the entire evaluation process;
- administrative and professional support to the Committee for Higher Education Quality and the Council for Higher Education;
- information, instruction, and consultation within self-evaluation processes;
- development of methodological bases for quality development;
- training and qualification of personnel responsible for implementing self-evaluation and of external quality evaluators;
- preparation of evaluation manuals;
- organisation of visits and promotion of the evaluation process;

- publication of reports;
- dissemination of domestic and international experiences;
- promotion of mutual assistance and co-operation among evaluators.

International co-operation

Comparison of international quality findings with the Slovenian higher education situation will be carried out in the framework of international co-operation. The absence of opportunities for internal comparison at subject level in a small country makes an international element essential. It can also help to achieve the aim of ensuring that Slovenian higher education is part of the mainstream of European developments. For this reason it will be necessary to strengthen co-operation with foreign experts in higher education quality, and to join international linking bodies, such as:

- the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE);
- the International Consortium for Maintenance of Higher Education Quality;
- the Conference of Rectors of Europe (CRE), that is, its experts, who carry out institutional audits in European universities;
- the UNESCO and the OECD, which are drawing up an international convention on the recognition of academic qualifications, which will be based on already introduced national systems of higher education quality assurance;
- the OECD project: Quality Evaluation, Quality Management, and Decision-Making Processes, which investigates the institutional effects of quality assessment.

Concluding comment

Currently, the main obstacles in the way of successful implementation of the proposed quality assurance system lie in the power relations in Slovenian higher education. In spite of the new Higher Education Act, which assures the autonomy of higher education institutions, the latter are in fact tightly controlled by governmental funding. The fact is that the Ministry of Education and Sport provides funds and controls expenditures for salaries, meets direct costs and part of maintenance costs for buildings and equipment, taking into account the type and scope of higher education programmes and the number of students and graduates. The funds are still allocated to the university members specifically, and

for this reason the locus of authority inside higher education is to a large extent at faculty level. Consequently, authority and power at the university level is still weak. In the future, and according to the new legislation, a lump sum will be awarded to universities directly. For the time being we have to take into account the relatively large discrepancy between the normatively prescribed system of Slovenian higher education and the 'real' one in which we are intending to interfere with quality assurance methods.

In such circumstances the implementation of a proposed quality assurance system could have a lot of unclear effects and unpredictable consequences. Institutions which decided to participate voluntarily in experimental self-evaluations are aware of such unexpected consequences and they still hesitate to start the self-evaluation process. An open question is how to encourage motivation and necessary enthusiasm for self-evaluation, which is a decisive element in the processes of quality assurance and quality improvement. My conclusion would be that in this initial period of scepticism, there is an urgent need to start an open and nation-wide debate about quality issues, a debate where all stake-holders in the higher education system have an equal opportunity to express their views.

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