

Evaluation Trends in Higher Education - a Global and Local Perspective

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Abstract

Accreditation, quality assurance, evaluation, culture of assessment, self regulation are some of the terms that became more familiar, in the last decade of the 20th century, as part of new directions for higher education, marked by different socio political, economical and cultural conditions, in the framework of the new globalisation trends.

In this presentation, the issue of evaluation is discussed in a critical way, analysing the historical periods of the last two decades and their implication for higher education in the Latin American context. A discussion on the new ideas of quality and quality assurance and the new approaches of evaluation is included in the analysis. Accreditation systems in response to internal and external conditions of the countries are also considered, in regards to the university, which is understood as a political organisation.

Some steps towards a self-reflexive evaluation are also proposed, in order to go beyond the idea of accountability. In that respect, the idea of a self-enlightened evaluation is discussed in order to enrich self understanding and self improvement of higher education's work.

Objectives

This presentation aims to:

1. Offer a conceptual framework that could sustain the idea of self-evaluation and self regulation at the university level.
2. Analyze in a critical way, some aspects related to the new demands for evaluation imposed upon the institutions of higher education.
3. Present some steps that could be taken into consideration for the design of a self-reflexive evaluation process.

Methods

The knowledge expressed in this presentation is based upon research carried out by the author regarding the culture of evaluation at the University of Costa Rica and the experience of 12 years of work at the Center for Academic Evaluation at that institution. It is also based on the learning experience as a UNISTAFF 2002 participant which provided valuable opportunities for further discussions among colleagues of different countries and enriched the knowledge about higher education in developed and Third World Countries.

Results and conclusions

This presentation offers an analysis of higher education and the relation of the university to new socioeconomical and cultural conditions. The issue of evaluation needs to be approached in a critical way since it is not value free and therefore it poses two important concerns: Who is in-charged of the process and what intentions does it carry. In the

framework of a globalized world, evaluation can also serve as a way to enrich personal and collective growth based on self understanding of own activities and commitments.

Keywords: Assessment, evaluation, higher education