

Chapter 16

Organizational Change and Development Through Quality Management in Higher Education Institutions: Theory, Practice, and Recommendations for Change Agents

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ABSTRACT

Issues of theory and practice of systemic quality management (QM) and organizational change and development (OCD) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are analyzed. It is argued that system-wide OCD in HEIs is typically driven by implementing QM systems. The basic characteristics of systemic QM and OCD and their interdependence are explicated. Practice-checked criteria for the implementation and evaluation of systemic QM/OCD are discussed. Based on this exemplary practice experience together with scholarly literature, a practice-used action research model of OCD is described. Furthermore, fundamental goals of systemic QM/OCD are put together, and success factors of QM-driven OCD are discussed including recommendations for change agents. Summarizing, systemic QM and related OCD in HEIs contribute to the rationalization of HEI governance because they enable the successful empirical practice of evidence-based organizational change and development (EBOCD) in the indispensable service of quality improvement.

INTRODUCTION

It is hard to ignore that our present time is coined by upheavals and crises that threaten social security and justice, sustainable economy, democracy and human rights. This affects also the political world order and not least the continued existence of earthly nature, the foundation of humanity's survival. As

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to be expected and unavoidably, these crises intrude the social organizations¹, among them, and quite prominent among them the knowledge-intensive organizations called higher education institutions² (HEIs) because they constitute intersectional societal knots in many respects. For example, HEIs should act as promoters of progress and keepers of valuable traditions. In addition, many forces overlap in HEIs which are capable of being relevant to the development of whole societies: basic research, applied research and knowledge and skills ('theory and practice') are in exchange in potentially all disciplinary fields from physics to political science; state power, democracy and professional as well as organizational autonomy³ are confronted with each other; the broad spectrum of moral and social opinions and beliefs of the diversity of social and religious groups within societies encounter the conceptions of freedom of expression, learning, research and the arts, and, more generally, the values of Enlightenment and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly [UNGA], 2008); and established views have to come to grips with the dynamics of educated societies and knowledge economies to name but a few aspects.

In other words, HEIs are at the center of the above-mentioned societal challenges of humankind since they represent one of the main decisive, innovative powers and educational forces in modern educated societies and knowledge economies. For example, HEIs are thus challenged by general demands of public policy (e.g. massification of higher education (HE)); requirements of national qualifications frameworks; government request to implement quality management⁴ (QM)); enhancement of 'market' position (e.g. rapid growth of international competition for students, staff, cooperation partners, research funding, etc.); tendency for entrepreneurial strategies. All this is in line with the observed rise and core features of contemporary organizations worldwide (Meyer & Bromley, 2013), and with the simultaneous widespread trend that in the last decades 'organizations in all organizational sectors have had to react to huge environmental pressures for change' (see Hamlin in Chapter 1 of this book) with the main, mutually interdependent, drivers being technology, governments and globalization. These various pressures in turn translate into severe organizational and quality challenges for contemporary HEIs worldwide. For example, they must improve their mission and implementation of education, training, and research, all in the service of sustainability; they must ameliorate their management of resources (human, economic, etc.); they must activate and acquire more funding. It is not easy to imagine how these challenges and threats could be approached and possibly solved without adequate organizational and strategic capacities, including also effective and efficient QM systems to assure and continually improve quality in all performance areas. Only the abilities and assets provided by systemic QM and with it inevitably linked organizational change and development (OCD) will enable HEIs to successfully assert themselves as organizational actors in a diverse, competitive and highly dynamic environment.

Against this backdrop, this chapter focuses on the following issues: Firstly, a very brief overview of the organizational specificities of HEIs is given, and it is argued that HEIs are traditionally rather temperate with respect to OCD (and QM) as compared to functional-hierarchic organizations. Secondly, the relation between systemic QM and OCD in social organizations, including HEIs⁵, is explicated. It is argued that in HEIs, OCD usually occurs as part of the implementation, maintenance and improvement of QM systems. Furthermore, a description of eight basic OCD levels that can be found in the four basic OCD related domains of 'leadership consciousness', 'organizational behavior', 'organizational structures' and 'organizational culture' is presented. This can serve as a diagnostic tool for the organizational *status quo* of an organization. Thirdly, the practice of OCD through implementation and evaluation of QM systems in HEIs is described in the form of a practice-checked criteria guide, a Seven-Step Action Research Process Model (SSARPM) of OCD and working mechanisms of counselling in QM/OCD. Fourthly,

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