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# Quality, internationalization, and English-medium instruction: a Dutch perspective of higher education

**Robert WILKINSON**

Maastricht University

Language Center

P.O. Box 616, 6200 Maastricht, The Netherlands

bob.wilkinson2010@gmail.com

Des changements marquants dans le contexte de l'enseignement supérieur conduisent à des modifications de la conception de la qualité. Un de ces changements a été l'internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur en réponse à la mondialisation. Des programmes à profil international ont été établis, souvent enseignés dans une autre langue. Les étudiants, les enseignants et les autres parties prenantes ont intérêt à démêler la qualité de ces programmes. La qualité elle-même, cependant, est un concept insaisissable, en fonction de l'acteur concerné. Sur la base d'exemples provenant des Pays-Bas, diverses conceptualisations de la qualité sont discutées, conduisant à un modèle de qualité qui est appliqué aux programmes profilés au niveau international. Deux risques principaux apparaissent. Au fur et à mesure que les critères de contrôle de qualité deviennent plus nombreux et plus précis, la praticabilité de la gestion de la qualité est entravée. Plus les critères de qualité deviennent transnationaux, moins les parties prenantes nationales concernées peuvent les percevoir localement.

## **Mots clés:**

Qualité, internationalisation, éducation supérieure, Pays-Bas, programmes en anglais.

## **Keywords:**

Quality, internationalization, higher education, Netherlands, English-medium instruction.

## **1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

The higher education landscape has changed dramatically over the past half-century, entailing a significant change in what quality means. It is valuable to remind ourselves of these changes as they impact on how quality may be construed with respect to international profiles, especially where educational programmes are delivered through an additional language. Moreover, we readily use terms without always being clear about what we mean, such as "international profile" or "additional language". We may unwittingly assume that our interlocutors share our own fuzzy conception. I shall return to the definitional dilemmas with respect to quality later.

Until the middle of the twentieth century, higher education could be seen as the exclusive domain of an established aristocratic and profession class that, while pursuing enlightened scientific knowledge, was able to perpetuate the elitist system. Even though the nineteenth century had seen a broadening to the professional classes (the creation of "red brick" universities in the UK, for

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<sup>1</sup> The author is most grateful to the editors and two anonymous reviewers for their painstaking diligence and their insightful comments on the manuscript.

example), and the establishment of the research university, such as on the Humboldtian model, higher education remained exclusive. Attempts to expand further to other sectors of the population would entail a dilution of the quality, if indeed the term quality was used in this context (see Altbach et al. 2009; Trow 2007).

The massive expansion of higher education since the mid-twentieth century progressively led to a steadily greater proportion of young people enjoying the right to higher education, with some countries even making it an automatic right if students had the appropriate secondary-school leaving qualifications (e.g. France, see Duru-Bellat 2015; Picard 2009). Meanwhile, the older established universities could retain their elitist perception and preserve the exclusive conception of quality.

The landscape of tertiary education is affected by numerous economic and social factors, such as globalization, competition and marketization (Harvey & Williams 2010: 4). Universities are challenged to cope with the consequences (see Knight 2008; Marginson & van der Wende 2007). Part of their response is to demonstrate the quality of their education.

Quality has been described as an 'elusive' concept (e.g. Neave 1994: 115) and its interpretation will vary according to who perceives it. This contribution attempts to unravel different conceptions of quality regarding higher education. In doing so, it focuses on quality with respect to the education that universities provide. Except occasionally, it does not consider quality in relation to universities' other function, research. This paper contributes to a volume concerned with internationalization, in particular the quality management of international profiles of higher education institutions. I draw upon the Dutch context as the Netherlands-Flemish Accreditation Organization (NVAO) was among the first to offer, alongside its accreditation process for Dutch and Flemish universities, a distinctive quality feature for internationalization. I take as an assumption that the procedure for the award of the distinctive feature may be relevant for other countries, including Switzerland. In the Netherlands and Flanders, the distinctive feature may be awarded at programme or institutional level. In this regard, the example of Maastricht University is presented as it was one of the first to be awarded the distinctive feature internationalization at institutional level.

## **2. Quality**

### *2.1 What is quality in higher education?*

Quality in higher education is concerned with both the two core roles of universities (Green 1994: 8), the provision of education and the conduct of research. As mentioned above, since this paper is concerned with education,

much of the following discussion regarding quality may not apply to universities' research role.

In their education role, universities are concerned with teaching and learning. In order to assess quality, it is necessary to take account of inputs and outputs, as well as the processes of teaching and learning. Universities are likely to have to meet the conditions of national and transnational quality assurance systems, which may entail meeting different, even conflicting requirements. Moreover, the cost involved may also be a cause for concern. In some cases, e.g. Maastricht University, individual faculties may be encouraged to seek international accreditation, on the grounds that national (re-)accreditation becomes "less intense" (Jan Vijge, Maastricht University internal audit, personal communication, 12 May 2016). A second concern is that quality is "an elusive concept" (Green 1994: 12): How can we measure quality objectively if we do not know what it is?

Before attempting to clarify the concept of quality, I should briefly touch on a broad distinction that sometimes confuses discussions of quality, that is the distinction between quality assurance and market-oriented quality. Quality assurance fundamentally implies evaluation by experts, such as in a peer review system. Essentially that suggests subjective judgements, since one may wonder what qualifies the experts to make their judgements. Should one ask 'experts' from other universities? Should 'experts' from 'semi-autonomous' independent commissions be recruited? The issue of how the comparison is conducted arises too. For example, in the Netherlands and Flanders, the quality of internationalization is compared to the national 'average'; hence quality is that which stands out. Quality assurance thus raises questions of integrity and trust, not to mention *quis custodis custodes*. It is moreover suspect in a time of higher education competition. In contrast, market-oriented quality is based on the use of performance indicators (Ball & Wilkinson 1994). However, the challenge here is to determine what should be a performance indicator. As Elton (1987) commented, "what is easily measurable is a performance indicator". As Dochy et al. (1990: 136-137) note, effective performance indicators are related to institutionally defined functions, and they serve as indicators of the extent to which institutional goals are achieved. For effectiveness, they depend on the valid operationalization of what they intend to indicate, and that they can indeed be measured and interpreted in a reliable and correct way. At their simplest, performance indicators do provide a rough and ready guide to the health of an educational system.

## 2.2 *Quality: conceptual definition*

It is not easy to define the concept of quality. It is an elusive, slippery, value-laden term (Green 1994: 12). Essentially, it is a multi-faceted, philosophical concept (compare the discussion in Schindler et al. 2015: 4). Broadly we can



construe four conventional understandings of quality. The first, the **traditional** understanding of quality, connotes the provision of a service or product that is distinctive and special, and that confers status on the owner or user. It implies extremely high standards of production, delivery and presentation, and using scarce resources, usually at great expense. Ultimately, it implies exclusivity. Products such as Rolex watches, high-end perfumes, and distinctive champagnes would fall under this concept of quality.

In higher education, this traditional concept of quality is visible in the attention to the exceptional and excellence (Newton 2006). The evidence lies in practices like benchmarking, league tables, rankings, and the use of a 'gold standard'. Quality may also focus on consistent maintenance of perfection where concern shifts to measuring process standards rather than outcome standards. In this conception quality is a mechanism to monitor the processes of or through assessment, accreditation, audit, or external examination and suchlike (see Harvey 2006; Harvey & Green 1993).

A second conventional understanding implies **conformance to standards**, whereby the product or service meets required characteristics. Standards are laid down, either by a government authority or a professional or international body (e.g. IEEE<sup>2</sup>), and the product or service must meet these to 'qualify' for the label. It is a static model of quality, where quality is defined in terms of what can be measured. In higher education, we can see quality conforming to standards as a combination of three different types of standards (see Newton 2006): academic standards that measure ability to meet a specified attainment; service standards that are devised to assess the level of service provided; and quality standards which reflect norms in terms of formal statements about expected practice (see ENQA<sup>3</sup> quality standards, ESG 2015).

The third understanding is where a product or service is deemed **fit for purpose**. In this case, quality is judged in relation to the extent to which a service or product meets its stated purpose. This is a developmental or dynamic model of quality, in that the purposes can change over time. In higher education, one can relate this concept of quality to employability and it may show itself in institutional mission statements. However, a prior question for higher education is precisely what the purpose of it is. Different stakeholders, such as government, students, employers, academic management, and academic staff, are likely to give conflicting answers. Quality as fit for purpose is basically a stakeholder-related concept. The quality of the service or product is judged against the costs of the investment by the stakeholder. Quality measurements will include performance data such as student retention and graduate employment.

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<sup>2</sup> Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Standards Association.

<sup>3</sup> European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

The fourth understanding is concerned with **meeting customers' needs**. In this conception, the challenge is to translate the future needs of customers and users into measurable characteristics. However, the problem in higher education is exactly who the customer is. Here, an overlap with the previous understanding is evident in that higher education has to meet the needs of different stakeholders, some of whom can clearly be conceived as customers, whereas others would not be.

However, quality can also be conceived as one of **transformation** (Newton 2006; Harvey & Williams 2010: 5), in which the learning process empowers students, enabling them to develop. The transformative concept can also be seen when changes in the institution enable better learning.

In summary, quality is concerned with judgements of attainment, service, and expected practice. It can be construed as relative to sets of stakeholders (i.e. variable); the efficient and effective running of a mechanism (a process); or as a theoretical concept. Schindler et al. (2015) reviewed the literature on the definition of 'quality' in higher education, noting that there had been little change since the 1990s. There seems to be some kind of agreement that quality is a multifaceted concept and which aspects you wish to choose depends on who you are, what your stake is, and what you want to do or achieve with the concept. They classified quality definitions under four categories: **purposeful** (products and services conform to the mission or vision, standards, etc.); **exceptional** (products and services achieve distinction, exclusivity, through high standards); **transformative** (products and services effect positive change in student learning and professional potential); and **accountable** (institutions are accountable to stakeholders for use of resources and delivery of products and services). Schindler et al. (2015) noted that quality is measured through sets of indicators (see above), referring in particular to **administrative** indicators, such as developing a mission or vision, achieving internal or external standards and goals, or procuring resources for optimal functioning; **student support** indicators regarding the availability and responsiveness of services, for example in addressing student complaints; **instructional** indicators, measuring the relevancy of educational content and the competence of instructors; and **student performance** indicators, such as student engagement with curriculum, faculty, staff, and increases in knowledge, skills, abilities that lead to gainful employment. Schindler et al. (2015) constructed a conceptual model of quality in higher education on the basis of their review (Fig. 1).

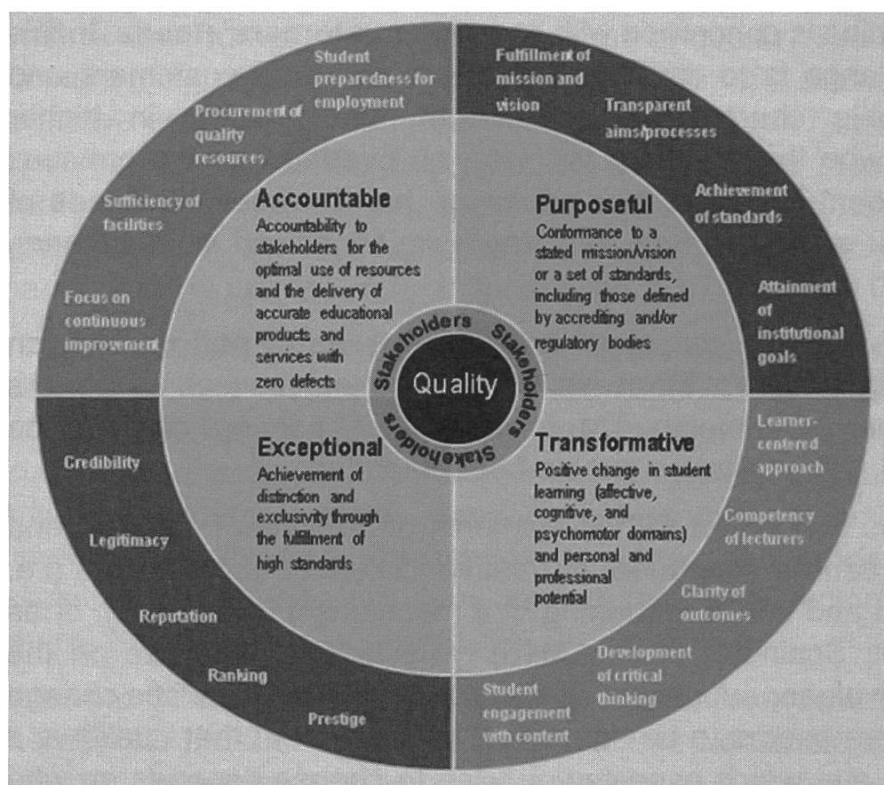


Figure 1: Conceptual model of quality. Schindler et al. (2015: 7). Reproduced with permission of the authors.

Schindler et al.'s (2015: 7) model starts in the centre from the perspective of the stakeholder. The way quality can be defined depends first and foremost on the stakeholder. The next circle stipulates four broad conceptualizations of quality, while the outer circle specifies examples of quality indicators that could be used to assess the conceptualizations. Schindler et al. (2015: 7) emphasize that the model depicts "a multifaceted approach to defining quality, which requires eliciting stakeholder perspectives to develop a broad conceptualization of quality and to accurately select specific indicators to measure that conceptualization of quality".

Essentially, quality monitoring is relative to and depends on the higher educational institution involved. This principle underlies the recommendations and guidelines in the revised European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)<sup>4</sup> adopted by Ministers responsible for higher education in the European Higher Education Area in 2015 (ESG 2015). Quality remains essentially "intangible", "the result of interaction between teachers, students and the institutional learning environment" (ESG 2015: 7).

<sup>4</sup> Authors: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA); European Students' Union (ESU); European University Association (EUA); European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE); in cooperation with: Education International (EI); BUSINESSEUROPE; European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

### 3. Principles, standards, criteria underlying quality management in the Netherlands

Instead of describing the ESG generally in detail, I turn to the Netherlands and show how the ESG are interpreted in this country. The Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organization (NVAO) follows ENQA guidelines, focusing on 'quality enhancement' rather than 'quality assurance'. In this sense, the NVAO guidelines (see also NVAO 2016) can be construed as transformative.

Accreditation takes place at two levels, institutional level and programme level. In addition, the NVAO operates accreditation in terms of distinctive quality features, e.g. internationalization, on which I focus further in this paper. It is a relative judgement: one institution is compared with other Dutch higher education institutions. Accreditation is based on principles similar to ESG, such that institutions have primary responsibility; there is respect for the diversity of systems, etc.; attention is paid to the development of a quality culture; and account is taken of needs and expectations of students and all stakeholders. This is also in line with the principles set by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA 2015). From the principles, the NVAO sets out standards, and then criteria against which the standards can be measured.

Quality is measured through a lengthy procedure involving self-evaluation, internal audit, and a critical reflection (note that for the NVAO distinctive feature internationalization, the critical reflection must be written in English). The NVAO then establishes an assessment panel (again note that for the NVAO distinctive feature internationalization, the panel must include two experts with an 'unquestionably international profile', which is not narrowly defined). The panel conduct a site visit, and then submit their recommendations. Finally, the NVAO makes its decision. It is likely that the processes in the Netherlands resemble those of other EHEA<sup>5</sup> countries.

The Netherlands does not have a separate system for measuring the quality of programmes where instruction is in an additional language<sup>6</sup>, such as EMI programmes. They will be assessed on the same basis as programmes in Dutch, although naturally comment would be made about the use of the language of instruction. All fourteen Dutch universities implement the University Teaching Qualification (better known by its Dutch acronym BKO, or *Basis kwalificatie onderwijs*) as a requirement for all academic teaching staff. The intention is to guarantee the quality of teaching (see for example Leiden University's Faculty of Humanities, Universiteit Leiden 2017a). The BKO does not specifically measure the quality of a teacher's English, but since it includes

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<sup>5</sup> European Higher Education Area.

<sup>6</sup> The term "additional language" itself can be considered contested, generating different connotations according to context, see for example De Angelis (2007), Leung (2001), and Leung & Creese (2010).



a portfolio of the teacher's work, this may well be in English if the academic is teaching through English. Dutch universities may offer additional quality qualifications for teaching through English (see also the example of Universiteit Leiden 2017b). The assessment may not be as detailed as the TOEPAS (Test of Oral English Proficiency of Academic Staff) developed in Denmark (Kling & Stæhr n.d., see also Dimova & Kling 2015), although the combination with the BKO portfolio which includes a self-reflective report and the qualification in English may be seen as equivalent (see Driessen et al. 2006, on the validity of self-reflection in a portfolio).

#### **4. Quality of internationalization – the Dutch practice**

As mentioned above, the NVAO system of accreditation in the Netherlands also offers a quality assessment of distinctive features, such as the degree to which an institution is international. The assessment of internationalization follows the framework set out by the European Consortium for Accreditation<sup>7</sup> (ECA 2015). It is conducted according to five standards and may be conducted at the level of the institution as a whole or at the level of a programme. The procedure is similar to that for accreditation. It is valuable to comment on the standards against which the institution is rated.

At institutional level, standard 1 specifies that there is a clear and shared vision on internationalization, supported by internal and external stakeholders, and linked to the quality of education. Standard 2 mandates an institutional policy that enables the realization of the vision. This policy includes, among other matters, specification of international and intercultural learning outcomes, with respect to teaching and learning and the staff and students. Language, however, is not necessarily a specification. As Maastricht University (2012: 5) indicated in its submission for the distinctive feature internationalization: "Language proficiency is not regarded as a goal in itself, but as an enabling competence and a tool that facilitates communication in the university's international setting." In terms of Schindler et al.'s (2015) model, the NVAO's internationalization would fit into the purposeful conception of quality. However, internationalization is measured "against" the other institutions in the country (Netherlands), that is, a kind of national average. A university or programme with special distinction for internationalization stands out from the others. The implication is that not every university/programme can acquire the distinction. Thus, it would fit into the "exceptional" or "exclusive" category overall, but, when we look at the standards, we do not see features of the exceptional category.

Standard 3 specifies a demonstration of the extent to which the policy is realized, for example the degree to which students are prepared for the global

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<sup>7</sup> The European Consortium for Accreditation comprises 18 members, quality assurance agencies, from eleven countries. Switzerland is not a member (ecahe.eu, accessed 2 May 2018).

labour market. Evidence for this would be the international elements and learning outcomes, as well as extracurricular activities with an intercultural and international focus. Further demonstration would lie in the language courses for students, the activities of career services, the existence of a relevant diploma supplement, as well as evidence from alumni, for example where they are working. In this case, the accountable and purposeful conceptions of quality seem to apply. Moreover, an institution would have to demonstrate an international profile in their education and research, which would include how it recruits and welcomes international students as well as the scope of international education projects, international research, and the extent of internationalization among the staff. Even this evidence may not be sufficient. The institution also has to demonstrate its social and global engagement (see Watson & Temple 2009). This will include research initiatives and institutes with societal relevance, as well as student initiatives and activities with societal relevance. In this case, we can see the transformative conception of quality coming into play.

The fourth and fifth standards concern improvement and integration strategies. An institution can demonstrate the inclusion of internationalization in its internal quality assurance system, and internationalization is effectively integrated into the organization and the decision-making structure. In both cases, this evidences a purposeful conception of quality.

It should be clear that the assessment of quality of internationalization is subjective based on the recommendation of visiting experts. One quality assessor (reported by Jan Vijge, Maastricht University internal audit, personal communication, 12 May 2016) was quoted as saying, "You spend two to three days visiting a university and usually find the opinion you formed in the first 20 minutes doesn't change."

## **5. English-medium instruction**

When we switch the language of instruction in higher education, we encounter some definitional dilemmas. There is a plethora of terms that have been used to describe the context. Although the over-arching term CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is widely used in primary and secondary education (Wolff 2009; see also Mehisto et al. 2008), two other terms predominate in higher education: ICLHE (Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education, e.g. Wilkinson 2004), partly because the higher education learning context differs significantly from primary and secondary education, and the dual focus on content and language goals characteristic of primary and secondary CLIL may be unequal, with content goals dominating. The second term is EMI (English-Medium Instruction), which has arisen because English is



by far the commonest additional language of instruction. EMI<sup>8</sup> may or may not specify language learning goals; indeed, many programmes, especially at Master's level, may denote learning of disciplinary content through English without any specified language learning goals (e.g. Coleman 2006; Doiz et al. 2013: 216-217). The goal of an EMI programme is the teaching and learning of disciplines through English as the language of instruction. Content is paramount, and language learning may or may not be a goal. This contrasts with ICLHE, where language learning goals are also prescribed, and where there is likely to be collaboration between content teachers and language teachers, sometimes involving team teaching. The aim in ICLHE is precisely to *integrate* the content and the language, which may for example generate a collaborative approach to how the disciplinary language works in the community of practice (Wenger 1998) of the relevant discipline. However, in her analysis of the English-medium paradigm, Schmidt-Unterberger (forthcoming 2018) argues that most integrated university programmes are best encapsulated under the term EMI which may be supported by embedded or adjunct courses in English for specific or academic purposes.

Teaching through the medium of an additional language began at Maastricht University in 1987 as described in Wilkinson (2013). It began as one small multilingual programme in the Faculty of Economics but gradually spread across the university to other faculties. It was not a planned process in that there was an end-goal to establish EMI as the dominant instructional medium in the university<sup>9</sup>; it was rather a series of reactions to opportunities and threats. Wilkinson has categorized five phases of EMI at Maastricht: cross-border, Europeanization, consolidation, globalization and monetization. Unterberger<sup>10</sup> (2014) found a similar pattern at the Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien/Vienna University of Economics and Business, but also detected a sixth phase which she termed *profiling*. At Maastricht, there was a period when language goals were deemed critical components of programmes, especially during the Europeanization and consolidation phases (see Fig. 2). Since then, however, the programmes through English fall more under the term EMI, in that language learning is seen as an enabling goal, not an end-goal. It is not "dual-focused" (Marsh 2002: 10).

As indicated earlier, the process of globalization, characterized as the meshing of myriad factors and influences such as mobility, trade, migration,

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<sup>8</sup> There are several other acronyms denoting more or less the same concept, although with slightly varying connotations: ETP (English-Taught Programmes, e.g. Wächter & Maiworm 2008), EMP (English-Medium Programmes, Unterberger 2012), EMT (English-Medium Teaching, Coleman 2006). Dafouz-Milne & Smit (2014) coined the term EMEMUS (English-Medium Education in Multilingual University Settings) to cover the wide heterogeneity of applications of English as the instructional language in universities.

<sup>9</sup> More than half the programmes at Maastricht University are taught through English.

<sup>10</sup> Now known as Schmidt-Unterberger.

harmonization of rules, and rankings, is arguably a principal reason for the rise of EMI programmes. As Marginson & van der Wende (2007: 4) note, universities are not objects of globalization, but in practice agents of globalization. Altbach (2004: 5-6) emphasizes the transformative process of globalization in that it meshes influences from many sources and transforms national systems and institutions. Internationalization, on the contrary, denotes the ways in which institutions respond to, cope with and manage globalizing factors and influences, thus encompassing processes of policies, practices, and beliefs.

## EMI: Phases of evolution

	Cross-border 1987	European- ization 1991	Consolidation 1995	Globaliz- ation 2002	Monetiz- ation 2007	Profiling 2013
Motivations						
<i>Practical</i>	geography	recruitment (internat. & exch. students)		recruitment (student expertise)	recruit- ment (money)	<i>cooperation</i>
<i>Idealist</i>	multi- lingualism		international- at-home			
<i>Educational</i>	new programmes	new programmes		new programmes		<i>collaboration/ complementarity</i>
<i>Survival</i>		home market (small/ saturated)	profile (bilingual)	profile (internat.)	profile (ranking)	<i>competition</i>
<i>Financial</i>			cost of biling. options		recruit- ment (bring in money)	

Figure 2: Phases and motivations for EMI as identified at Maastricht University, Netherlands (Wilkinson 2013: 9); extended by Unterberger (2014: 153) in her study of Vienna University of Economics and Business. The dates refer to the start of the phase at Maastricht University.

According to Maiworm & Wächter (2014: 38), EMI in Europe remains small, with less than six percent of students in the European Higher Education Area enrolled in full-time EMI programmes. They report an S-shaped growth pattern, with the rate of growth highest in south-west Europe with eight times more programmes than in 2007, but with growth plateauing in some previous growth areas. While the Academic Cooperation Association's (ACA) study, coordinated by Wächter and Maiworm (2014), only surveyed programmes fully taught through English, other variants of EMI programmes also exist including programmes where the language is both the means and the target, as well as programmes that may be bilingual or multilingual (see also Wilkinson 2017).

Maastricht University presents a practical example for probing the quality monitoring of its international profile. While initially content and language development were seen as structured goals, with language both a medium and

a target, by the early 2000s critical mass could be said to have been reached, in that the quality of local students and international students 'seemed' "good enough" in English. No definition was ever given of "good enough". We may presume that this was 'measured' for example by a low number of complaints about the quality of English and by the relative degree of success in passing exams. We can place the change at the time that English became the medium of instruction in many programmes where the only explicit linguistic target was the development of academic writing skills. Moreover, little or no attention was paid to students' first language (L1). In terms of the European Union's policy for all citizens to develop their competences in their mother tongue plus two foreign languages, MT + 2 (European Commission, 2008), Maastricht University has moved in its international programmes from MT + 2 to MT + ENG + 1 to ENG + MT ( $\pm 1$ ), always assuming that students' competences in their mother tongue do not erode (but see Wilkinson & Gabriëls 2018: 352, whose interviewees do report first language erosion).

In the current conception of EMI programmes at Maastricht, it is appropriate to look at how quality is conceived and measured. The most important aspect is the identification and measurement of learning outcomes. These will of course be largely programme-dependent. A second critical aspect is student graduation times (or throughput time), measuring what percentage of students graduate within the time frame expected for the programme. A third key aspect is student graduate employment and the length of an unemployment or job-seeking period. Fourthly, attention is paid to regular student satisfaction surveys, both internal faculty surveys and those conducted periodically by contracted outside agencies. Note is also taken of the complaints received about a course, as well as how those complaints are dealt with. A fifth key point is the academic staff's perception of the quality of the students. Finally, the staff's competences in English are monitored, as well as recruitment, especially from among international PhD students. These measures are largely quantitative and can be categorized under Schindler et al.'s (2015) purposeful category of quality management. The above list pays little attention to qualitative aspects of the quality measurement of learning programmes. Here, we would be drawn to the throughput of programmes, that is teaching and learning processes. This would cover the optimal design of programmes and courses, whether the teaching and learning approaches do reach the learning goals, whether alternative approaches might yield superior outcomes, as well as looking into the less tangible aspects such as the student-teacher relationship in that a more empathetic learning environment is suggested to be conducive to better outcomes (see for example Mykkonen et al. 2015).

At the programme level, there are principally four groups of factors that affect programme quality (summarized in Fig. 3): student factors, such as entry and exit competences, motivation, and cultural background; teacher factors, such as content expertise, teaching competences, and multicultural teaching

competences; programme design factors, such as the conceptual design of the programme and its implementation, the use of student-centred approaches, and the methods employed; and institutional contextual factors, such as location and history, services provided, and the scope and depth of the employment market the institution serves. The list is not exhaustive.

## Quality and EMI: Factors involved

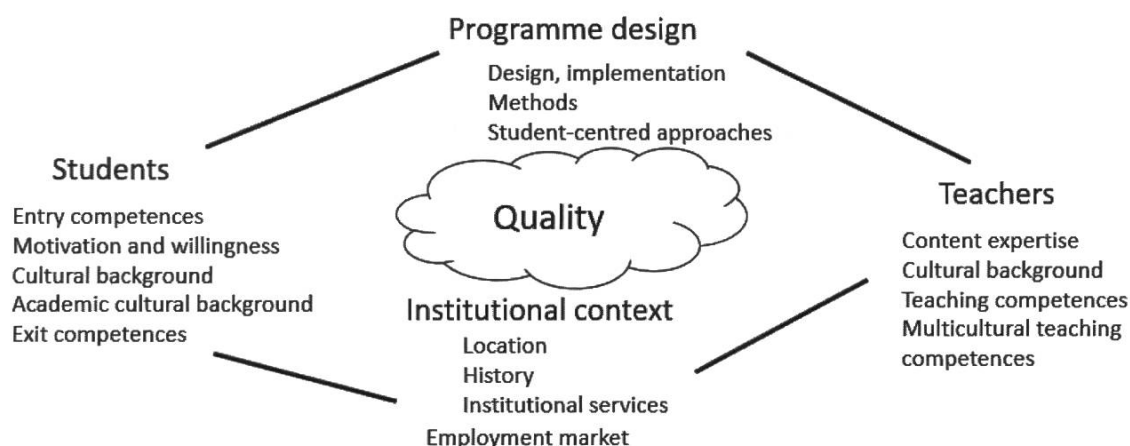


Figure 3: Groups of factors mediating quality at programme level

Assessing and monitoring quality of an international profile is thus a complex and dynamic process, even if it is limited to EMI programmes. The project, "Developing Quality Management Parameters for International Profiles at Universities of Applied Sciences", for which this paper was written, is an example of an approach to master this complex process. The project aimed to develop and test quality management parameters that would aid institutions in grounding their participation in an international programme of excellence (see Studer, this issue). However, if we wish to assay quality in international profiles in EMI programmes alone, we cannot merely take account of the international dimensions of the programme. We have to measure all aspects, on the grounds that the whole makes up more than the parts, and ostensibly non-international components may have catalytic effects on the international dimensions. Biggs (2001: 222) noticeably cites a quote from Seymour (1993): "because quality resides not in any one performance indicator, but in the way the system as a whole works, individual indicators do not give the picture of the whole, which is what matters". The same may apply by extension to limited groups of indicators.

In the following, I take a knowledge-skills-attitude (KSA) approach to the competences among students and teachers that would form part of a measurement instrument for quality in an internationally profiled EMI programme. Fig. 4 lists the competences that could be assessed for students

and teachers, whereas Fig. 5 notes a selection of factors related to the programme design and the institutional context.

Many other skills could be added to this list of competences (Fig. 4). For instance, for students it may well be important to monitor employment skills, career skills, and lifelong learning skills. The items in bold relate to those that are assumed to impact most likely on the quality of the international profile of an EMI programme, especially those under teacher competences.

Categorizing the factors where internationalization plays a key role leads to quite an intricate patchwork of aspects to measure or judge. We can deduce quality (of the programme, institution, teacher or student) as deriving from the interaction of these factors and likely with other factors too. It should be borne in mind that many of the factors that would relate to any teaching and learning in higher education (e.g. in an L1 context) also apply, but they are not necessarily included here.

A challenge facing those constructing a set of quality management parameters for international profiles is that the criteria will inevitably overlap. The process of criteria development will aim to minimize this overlap so that two criteria do not tap the same factors (see Studer, this issue). The objective for quality management parameter development in this case is to broaden the number of criteria to as many as are needed to cover the international elements of quality management in international profiles, but to then pare them down to as few as are practical to implement. If the criteria employed are at too high a level of detail, they will become unworkable. Arguably, too detailed criteria are unnecessary for the quality measurement of an international profile.

Students		
Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic disciplinary knowledge/domain(s)</li> <li><b>Language of instruction/learning</b></li> <li>Academic tasks/requirements</li> <li><b>Academic/professional vocabulary/terminology</b></li> <li><b>Discourse &amp; academic cultural conventions in disciplines</b></li> <li><b>Challenges/problems/issues as seen in other cultures/languages</b></li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information literacy and documentation skills</li> <li>Critical thinking skills</li> <li>Analytical skills (interpreting, synthesizing)</li> <li>Evaluation skills</li> <li>Mathematical literacy</li> <li>ICT skills</li> <li>Self-assessment skills</li> <li><b>Communication skills (reporting, presenting, disseminating)</b></li> <li>Interpersonal skills (networking, teamworking)</li> <li><b>Intercultural skills (working with others in different languages, cultures, competences)</b></li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approaches to learning (deep, surface)</li> <li>Conceptions of learning (low [knowledge transmission], high [knowledge transforming])</li> <li>Motivation (intrinsic, instrumental, utility, etc. (Pintrich 2003))</li> <li>Perseverance</li> <li>Willingness, curiosity, interest</li> <li><b>Cultural, social, language, academic differences</b></li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul>



Teachers		
Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic discipline(s)/ domain(s)</li> <li>Teaching discipline(s) (e.g. how to order information)</li> <li>Language of discipline</li> <li><b>Language knowledge (e.g. pronunciation)</b></li> <li><b>Academic/professional vocabulary/terminology</b></li> <li><b>Discourse &amp; academic cultural conventions in disciplines</b></li> <li><b>Assessment competences</b></li> <li><b>Cultural, social differences (including impact on learning)</b></li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching skills</li> <li>Assessment skills</li> <li>Management skills (e.g. class, information, time, pressure)</li> <li><b>Skills in managing different teaching and learning approaches</b></li> <li><b>Communication skills (lecturing, tutoring, monitoring, giving feedback, etc.)</b></li> <li><b>Interpersonal skills (networking, teamworking)</b></li> <li><b>Intercultural skills (understanding different cultures, different academic cultures, different approaches to learning, working with others in different languages, cultures, competences)</b></li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empathy and interest in individuals</li> <li>Motivation (intrinsic, instrumental, utility, etc.)</li> <li>Patience (under time pressure)</li> <li><b>Understanding student learning challenges</b></li> <li><b>Cultural, social, language, academic differences</b></li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul>

Figure 4: Competences in students and teachers that could be monitored in a quality management system for an internationally profiled EMI programme (not exhaustive). Items in bold are assumed particularly to impact on the quality of the international profile of an EMI programme.

Programme design factors	Institutional contextual factors	
	Management	Facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goals: aims and objectives</li> <li>Design and implementation</li> <li>Achievement: how to know when the goals are attained</li> <li>International/ intercultural elements</li> <li>Exchanges, internships, collaborations</li> <li>Employability</li> <li>Language of instruction (code switching, code meshing)</li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher recruitment and staff development</li> <li>Multilingual / multicultural group composition (nationality, languages, gender, competences)</li> <li>Group interaction (attention to awareness of individual differences, inclusion/exclusion potential)</li> <li>Identity building (belonging to academic &amp; cultural community)</li> <li>Strategies for cooperation</li> <li>Documentation of outcomes (e.g. transcripts)</li> <li>Monitoring, auditing</li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical buildings, equipment</li> <li>Library, ICT</li> <li>Support systems</li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul>

Figure 5: Factors in programme design and institutional context that could be monitored in a quality management system for an internationally profiled EMI programme (not exhaustive)

## 6. Conclusion

In this article, I have sketched the background to quality in the contemporary higher education context. Higher education has become a neo-liberal market (e.g. Wilkins 2012), subject to competitive forces, whereby efficiency has a



critical role. Quality is a comparative concept where ranking, benchmarking and outputs are decisive. Quality, however, remains a rather elusive concept, the definition of which depends on who is making it. Because higher education has such a diversity of stakeholders, the manner in which quality can be conceptualized depends primarily which stakeholder or stakeholders are concerned. Quality in the eyes of students will differ from how it is construed by employers. Moreover, a distinction can be made concerning the object of quality management, whether we are concerned with teaching or research, whether it is a question of the institution as a whole or of an individual programme. I have adopted the conceptual model of quality elaborated by Schindler et al. (2015), which depends primarily on the stakeholders concerned and then on four broad conceptualizations of quality that may be sought, before identifying the potential indicators for the chosen conceptualization.

After briefly looking at how quality of higher education is assessed in the Netherlands, I have reviewed the Dutch approach to the quality of internationalization, before delving into the nature and quality of EMI and internationally profiled programmes. The final part looks at aspects and factors that could be measured theoretically to monitor the quality of an internationally profiled EMI programme. I refer here to the work in the project "Developing Quality Management Parameters for International Profiles in Universities of Applied Sciences" (see Studer, this issue). The more numerous and the more finely calibrated the factor (or descriptor), the more unworkable the quality management of programmes become.

Apart from the detail of descriptors used to measure quality, there is a second risk in quality management, the scope of international comparison. The more complex and the more transnational the system, the less it reflects the national culture and national politics (see Stensaker & Gornitzka 2009: 125, who comment on the difficulty of establishing trust across nation states). Transnational quality management risks distancing itself from what national stakeholders (e.g. taxpayers) may view as quality. What is quality in internationally profiled programme through an additional language may often be an intangible interaction between student, teacher, programme and context. Quality is the balanced outcome of practices, processes, procedures, expectations, beliefs, attitudes, and values, some of which can be managed.

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