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Breakthroughs in Quality Management of Higher Education

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8. Ten Years of the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Teaching at the University of Navarra

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Abstract

In recent years, European universities have been immersed in a profound change. Quality has emerged as one of the decisive factors in the configuration of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The University of Navarra is aware of this fact, and has, from the beginning of this process, committed itself to implanting a "culture of quality."

In this article, we discuss the activities undertaken at the University of Navarra in the area of teaching quality, beginning in 1998 -the year in which the University began its evaluations of the degree programs in Industrial Engineering and Pharmacy- and continuing through the present day.

We begin the article by describing briefly the history of the commitment to quality within the EHEA. Next, we present the process that has been followed at the University of Navarra in order to promote an internal system of quality assurance, via the creation of the Commission for Quality Evaluation and Accreditation of the University of Navarra (CECA).

Keywords: *evaluation, quality, University of Navarra, university teaching.*

1. A Brief History of Quality Improvement in the European Higher Education Area

On June 19, 1999, the Ministries of Education of 29 European countries signed a historic agreement in the city of Bologna, laying the foundations for the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the well-known and frequently discussed pan-European institution.

The beginning of this process of change in higher education in Europe took place one year previously, on May 25, 1998. On this date at the Sorbonne, the Ministers of Education of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom signed a Declaration urging the harmonization of the design of the European Higher Education System. In their vision, the frontiers between the various countries would disappear, while at the same diversity would be respected, so that national identities and common interests could be interrelated and strengthened, to the benefit of Europe, its students and its citizens in general.

Since then, biannual meetings have been celebrated by the European Ministers of Education in order to analyze the progress of the implantation of the Bologna Process, as well as to decide upon new steps that need to be undertaken in order to meet the objectives proposed for 2010.

- Declaration of the Sorbonne – 1998 (4 countries)
- Declaration of Bologna – 1999 (29 countries)
- Communiqué of Prague – 2001 (32 countries)
- Declaration of Berlin – 2003 (33 countries)
- Communiqué of Bergen – 2005 (45 countries)
- Communiqué of London – 2007 (46 countries)

Within this framework, one of the six key objectives contained in the **Declaration of Bologna** for the construction of the EHEA is the promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance, with the objective of development comparable criteria and methodologies.

The **Communiqué of Prague** urged universities, state agencies and the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) to collaborate in the establishment of a common working framework and to disseminate best practices.

Another step forward in the area of quality was taken in the **Declaration of Berlin**: this document indicated that the initial responsibility for the accreditation of quality in higher education is in the hands of each institution, laying the foundation for real responsibility for the educational system within the national framework for quality. At the European level, the ENQA was called upon to develop a consensual set of norms, procedures and suggestions in order to guarantee quality, and in order to research methods for assuring an adequate system of evaluation.

In the **Bergen Declaration**, the Ministers adopted the "Criteria and Directives for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" developed by the ENQA.

In Spain, the Organic Law for Universities (LOU) recognizes as one of its basic objectives the improvement of quality in the overall university system, as well as in each of its specific aspects (Article 31). Therefore, the Spanish Government created the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (**ANECA, Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad and Acreditación**) on July 19, 2002. The ultimate goal of ANECA, along with the organs for evaluation determined by the laws of the various Autonomous Communities, is to contribute to the quality improvement of the higher education system through the assessment, certification and accreditation of university degrees, programmes, teaching staff and institutions.

2. The Commission for Quality Evaluation and Accreditation

The University of Navarra has been conscious from the beginning of the importance of integration within the EHEA. This has given rise to the promotion of the necessary policies in order to promote an internal system of quality assurance. During the 2002-03 academic year, the University of Navarra created the Commission for Quality Evaluation and Accreditation (**CECA**), involving the participation of the Offices of the Vice President of the Faculty, the Vice President of Academic Infrastructure and Educational Innovation, and the Vice President of Research.

The functions of this Commission (CECA) are:

- Developing, guiding and coordinating the process of evaluation, certification and improvement of quality for the various degree programs of the University, in order to comply with the future accreditation which the LOU will eventually require.
- Guiding and informing the university community of the activities undertaken at the University concerning the programs of the ANECA, with the objective of strengthening the continual improvement of the programs and services of the University.
- Evaluating quality and identifying existing necessities for improvement at the University, as well as analyzing the results of the improvement plan.
- Adopting, promoting and taking into account the criteria for European convergence agreed upon for the Bologna process, as well as developing comparative studies concerning its implantation in Europe.

The LOU has established requirements for the improvement of quality in the higher education system via continual evaluation of degree programs, teaching and research faculty, and university services. In this way, the LOU intends to improve the teaching and research activity of Spanish universities, along with their administration. This process of evaluation must follow certain objective and transparent procedures.

The University of Navarra has maintained formally established evaluation programs which fulfill the legal requirements of the LOU since 1998. In that year, the degree programs of Industrial Engineering and Pharmacy were evaluated. Following these evaluations, various services of the University have been evaluated, in particular the Library Service. In addition, a large percentage of the faculty have been evaluated regarding their teaching and research activity, within the Faculty Evaluation Program of the ANECA.

In the following sections, we describe the evaluation programs in which the University has participated in these years. We distinguish three areas of activity:

- Evaluation of Instruction.
- Evaluation of the Faculty.
- Evaluation of Services.

3. Evaluation of Instruction

3.1 National Plans and the Program of Institutional Evaluation

Beginning in 1995, when the Ministry of Education (through the Council of Universities) established the first National Plan for Evaluation, and continuing through the current academic year, the University of Navarra has undertaken the evaluation of 20 degree programs. Currently, this evaluation is delegated to ANECA, and is carried out through the Institutional Evaluation Program.

The evaluation model has evolved over the course of the years. Currently, the model being used is based on the EFQM Model, and its application at the University of Navarra can be described via the following diagram:

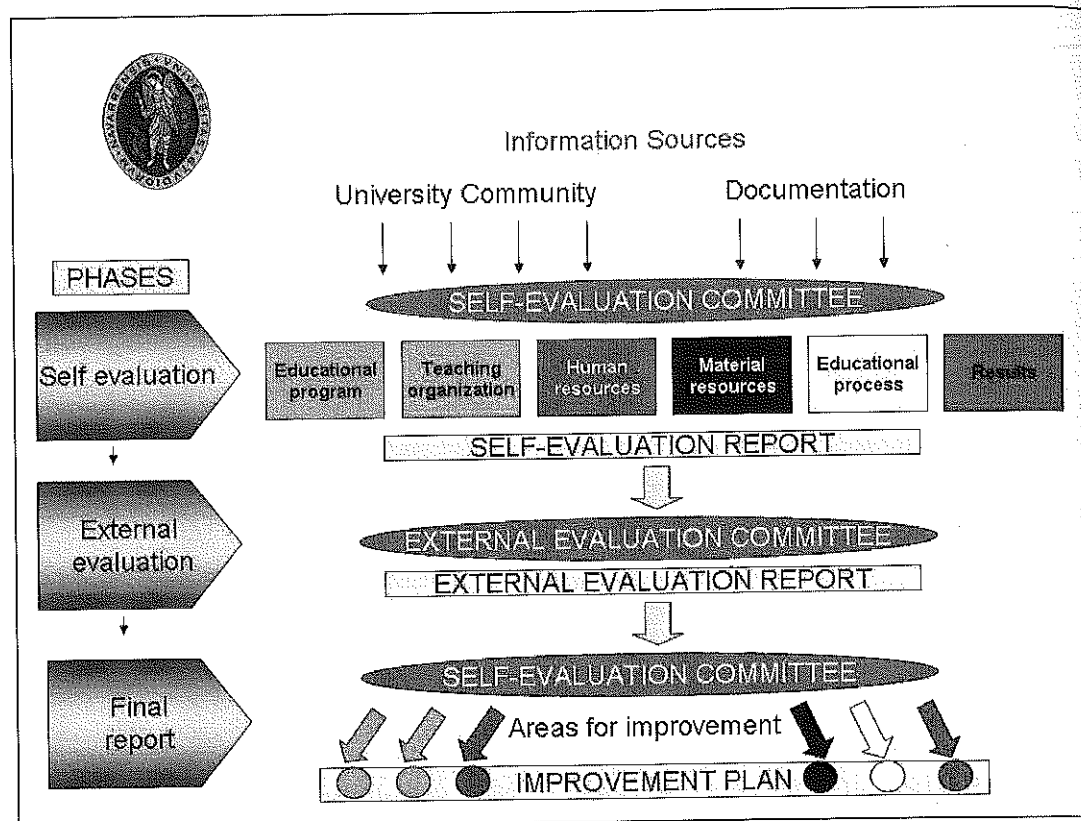


Fig. 1: diagram of the model for institutional evaluation

This is a process of diagnosis of the strengths and weaknesses of the degree program, which concludes with a Plan for Improvements, indicating the changes necessary in order to improve the teaching programs evaluated.

The model involves three phases, and is structured on the basis of six criteria:

CRITERIA:

- Educational program
- Organization of instruction
- Human resources
- Material resources
- Educational process
- Results

PHASES:

- **SELF-EVALUATION:** the unit to be evaluated, through a Self-Evaluation Committee, describes and evaluates its situation in the light of established criteria. At this point, initial proposals for improvement will be identified, which are the basis for the development of

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plans for action which should be put into effect once the process has concluded. The result is the Self-Improvement Plan.

- **EXTERNAL EVALUATION:** A group of external evaluators, appointed by ANECA, will analyze the Self-Improvement Plan, via a visit to the unit being evaluated. This group will propose its own set of recommendations and suggested improvements. The result is the External Evaluation Report.
- **FINAL PHASE:** In this phase, the proposals for improvement developed during the self-evaluation and external evaluation phases will be compared, and the required actions for improvement will be defined. In addition, the tasks to be undertaken in order to achieve these improvements will be defined, and the personnel responsible for carrying out these tasks will be identified. The result of this phase is the Improvement Plan.

The first **National Plan for the Evaluation of University Quality** was established by the Spanish Council of Universities in 1995, with a duration of 5 years (RD 1947/1995). During this period, the University of Navarra evaluated the degree programs of Industrial Engineering and Pharmacy. This first evaluation was very positive, and the experience gained during the process was highly useful for the organization of later evaluations. In addition, these evaluations signaled the promotion in the University of a "culture of quality," which has progressively involved the rest of the Centers and Schools.

The 2nd **Plan for the Evaluation of University Quality** was also coordinated and managed by the Council of Universities. It was initially established for a period of six years (RD 408/2001); nevertheless, the passing of the Organic Law 6/2001 made significant changes to the general organization and existing structures in the area of quality evaluation and measurement of the Spanish university system. In Article 31, this law assigns the function of evaluation, as well as the supervision of the processes for certification and accreditation, to the **National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA)**, as well as to the organs for evaluation established by the Autonomous Communities. During this period, the University of Navarra evaluated six degree programs. Medicine was evaluated in 2002. In the following year, the degree programs of Education and Educational Psychology of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences were evaluated, as well as the following programs imparted by the School of Communication: Audiovisual Communication, Journalism, and Advertising and Public Relations.

Beginning with the 2003-04 academic year, **ANECA** has been in charge of the process of evaluation for the improvement of the quality of instruction of university degree programs. The program that was developed is the **Program for Institutional Evaluation**, and this program is still being applied, with some modifications. Via this program, 12 degree programs have been evaluated at the University of Navarra:

- **2004:** Business Administration and Management (LADE), Economics, History and Nursing.
- **2005:** Technical Architecture and Law.
- **2006:** Philosophy, Chemistry, Human Nutrition and Dietetics, and Industrial Engineering.

- **2007:** Biology and Hispanic Philology. (The evaluation of these two programs is currently underway. The first phase has been completed, and the external evaluators will perform their visit in October 2007).

A synthesis of the degree programs that have been evaluated can be found in the following table:

		1998	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
		I PNECU	II PCU		PEI			
DEGREE PROGRAM	Industrial Engineering	X					X	
	Pharmacy	X						
	Medicine		X					
	Education			X				
	Educational Psychology			X				
	Journalism			X				
	Audiovisual Communication			X				
	Advertising and Public Relations			X				
	Business Administration and management				X			
	Economics				X			
	History				X			
	Nursing				X			
	Technical Architecture					X		
	Law					X		
	Philosophy						X	
	Chemistry						X	
	Human Nutrition and Dietetics						X	
	Biology							X
	Hispanic Philology							X

At the University of Navarra, there exists a process of supervision in order to verify the implantation of the improvements that are described in the Improvement Report. A protocol has been established for this purpose, which requires that the respective Centers and Schools produce a report each year which describes the improvements undertaken during the academic year, and which indicates the improvements to be undertaken over the course of the following academic year.

3.2 Official Graduate Degree Programs

The official graduate degree programs of each university are structured into instructional programs leading to the obtaining of the degree of Master or Doctor. These programs are developed and organized by each university in accordance with the academic requirements and criteria established by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science (RD 56/2005, RD 1509/2005).

Prior to their implantation, official graduate programs must be approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, following a process of evaluation.

As of the 2006-07 academic year, the University of Navarra currently offers 12 officially approved graduate degree programs. 10 new programs have been approved for the 2007-08 academic year (Resolution of June 22, 2006, Resolution of May 17, 2007).

Official Graduate Degree Programs approved for the 2006-07 academic year:

- Official Graduate Degree Program in Molecular and Cellular Biology (Master and Doctorate)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Nutrition, Physiology and Health (Master and Doctorate)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Drugs and Health (Master and Doctorate)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Organizational Governance and Culture (Master and Doctorate)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Bioethics (Master)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Communication (Master)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Economics and Finance (Master)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Business Law (Master)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Tax Consultancy (Master)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Family Sciences (Master)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Management Science (Master)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Business Administration (Master)

Graduate Degree Programs approved for the 2007-08 academic year:

- Official Graduate Degree Program in Biomedical Engineering (Master and Doctorate)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Neuroscience and Cognition (Master and Doctorate)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Applied Medical Research (Doctorate)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Management Science (Doctorate)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Research in Primary Care (Master)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Management (Master)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Education (Master)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Contemporary Studies (Master)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Architectural Design (Master)
- Official Graduate Degree Program in Nursing (Master)

3.3 National Quality Award for Doctoral Studies

Another of the programs in which the University of Navarra participates is the **National Quality Award for Doctoral Studies**. The first year that this award was offered was the 2003-04 academic year (ORDEN ECD 3204/2002) and the University received the Award for three programs: Industrial Engineering, Philosophy and Neurosciences.

During the following academic years, more doctoral programs have entered the competition for this award, and those that have previously obtained the Award have renewed their participation.

Currently, the following doctoral programs have been awarded the National Quality Award at the University of Navarra:

- Industrial Engineering (MCD 2003-00693)
- Neurosciences (MCD 2003-00695)
- Philosophy (MCD 2003-00692)
- Biopharmacy, Pharmacology and Drug Quality (MCD 2004-00352)
- Molecular and Cellular Biology (MCD 2004-00346)
- Communication (MCD 2005-00209)
- Business Administration (MCD 2005-00210)
- Design, Synthesis and Biological Evaluation of Drugs (MCD 2005-00211)
- History (MCD 2006-00121)
- Hispanic Literature (MCD 2006-00119)

The National Quality Award implies the recognition of the scientific-technical and instructional quality of the doctoral program, as well as of the groups and departments which impart the doctoral instruction. Obtaining the National Quality Award is a requirement which is indicated in the Spanish Organic Law for Universities (LOU), and is derived from the greater interaction of the European university systems within the framework of the EHEA.

Along with the evaluation of instruction, it is also necessary to discuss the evaluation of the teaching faculty.

4. Evaluation of the Teaching Faculty

One of the fundamental axes of academic activity is constituted by the teaching personnel. The Organic Law for Universities 6/2001, in Article 31, states that one of the objectives of quality assurance is the improvement of teaching and research activity. In order to comply with this objective, the law proposes the evaluation of this activity. In addition, in Article 72.2, modified by the 9th additional clause of the Organic Law 4/2007, the law states:

"Independently of the general conditions which are established in conformance with Article 4.3, at least 50 percent of the university faculty must be in possession of the degree of Doctor, and at least 60 percent of the faculty with a Doctoral degree must have obtained a positive evaluation by the National Agency for Quality Evaluation and Accreditation, or by an external evaluation determined by the corresponding Autonomous Community. For these purposes, the total number of Professors will be calculated on the basis of full-time equivalence. The same requirements will be applied to private academic centers which are associated with private universities."

In 2003, ANECA began its Program for the Evaluation of University Faculty. This program is structured into five evaluation committees: Experimental Sciences, Health Sciences, Technical Instruction, Social and Legal Sciences, and Humanities. These committees follow publicly

available evaluation criteria; in addition, the methods for calculation and the conditions that must be met in order to receive a positive evaluation are also publicly available (BOE nº 54, March 4, 2005).

The faculty positions for which the evaluation can be requested are:

- Profesor Contratado Doctor [Contracted Professor with Doctorate]
- Profesor de Universidad Privada [Professor of a Private University]
- Profesor Ayudante Doctor [Assistant Professor with Doctorate]
- Profesor Colaborador [Collaborating Professor]

The merits upon which the evaluation is based are distributed in four categories, each of which has a defined weight according to the faculty position for which the evaluation has been requested:

- Research experience
- Teaching experience
- Academic formation and professional experience
- Other merits

Since this program began, 326 of the 589 professors of the University of Navarra have obtained a positive evaluation within one of the personnel categories indicated above¹.

In addition, in the previous two years, out of the totality of the teaching personnel of the University of Navarra, 7 professors have obtained recognition (via habilitation) as Chairs, 47 as Titular Professors, and one as Chair of a University School. In addition, 15 professors have obtained an exemption from the necessity to take the official examinations for obtaining a Chair.

5. Certificate of Quality of the Library Service

The Library Service of the University of Navarra obtained the Certificate of Quality from ANECA in 2004. During this year, 12 libraries obtained the Certificate, and in 2003, 7 libraries obtained this recognition. The Certificate, which is valid for three academic years (2004-07), constitutes a recognition of the quality of the services provided by the libraries to which it has been awarded, and provides the possibility of applying for official grants for improvements of services.

The application process is open to all those Spanish universities which have undertaken a prior process of evaluation or certification. In the case of the Library Service of the University of Navarra, the evaluation process, within the framework of the 2nd Quality Plan for Spanish Universities, was undertaken between October 2002 and May of 2004. This process of institutional evaluation involved three phases: self-evaluation or internal evaluation, external evaluation by a committee of external evaluators appointed by ANECA, and a final evaluation report, which constitutes the synthesis of the two previous phases.

The ANECA Evaluation Committee in charge of evaluating the applications for the Certificate of Quality, as well as supervising the process of evaluation its results, took into consideration the

¹ Professors of the Ecclesiastical Schools and the Language Institute are not included.

evolution and current state of the various resources and services during the period between 1999 and 2003. Among other aspects, the following issues were considered:

- funding, bibliographic resources, physical space, equipment, hours of operation
- use of the library, lending, education level of the users, electronic resources
- degree of usage and satisfaction of the users with the services received
- existing norms for services
- management and organization of the Service: planning, development, description of the processes
- annual activity reports
- internal communication and communication with users
- training activities for Library personnel
- participation in internal and external innovation projects
- activities for interlibrary cooperation
- publications and activity of Library personnel
- improvement plans and mechanisms for review and supervision

6. Conclusions

- a) At the University of Navarra, we maintain a commitment to quality, which leads us to make the necessary efforts for promoting a system of quality assurance in order to implement needed improvements. This characteristic is in accordance with the fundamental spirit of the University: to provide an outstanding Christian service, we are moved to seek excellence. In addition, this attitude is a permanent requirement due to the context of our market, in which the majority of competing universities offer degree programs with the tuition subsidized by the government.
- b) The plans for supervision of improvements have particular importance, in order to obtain the best possible results for the indicated objectives, together with an adequate assignment of resources.
- c) The process to be followed in the area of quality assurance must be continuous, not only in order to obtain future accreditations for our degree programs, but also in order to attain an improved our level of quality and excellence.
- d) A key principle for obtaining the quality desired is the involvement of all members of the University community in the process. Only in this way will effective results be obtained.
- e) Along with the proposals and suggestions of government institutions and professors, those coming from students, graduates and employees have particular relevance. It is important to reinforce the mechanisms for processing these suggestions and proposals, and implement the corresponding actions.

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