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QUALITY CULTURE AS A PREREQUISITE FOR EFFECTIVE QUALITY MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of research. Introduction of a new element of quality in higher education sector and highlight important aspects of quality culture in quality management.

Research methodology. An analysis of the existing body of literature related to quality, culture and quality culture.

Originality /value of research of the paper is that it can serve as a theoretical guideline for regional academics, scholars and university managers to formulate their quality management processes in accordance with existing quality culture or to reshape their organizations bringing new aspects of quality culture.

Research results. The authors reach the conclusion that, in order to have real quality in higher education, it is important to introduce a quality culture and to constantly improve it taking into consideration both cultural/ psychological element and structural/managerial element of quality culture.

Keywords: quality management, quality culture, organizational change.

САПА МӘДЕНИЕТІ САПАНЫ ТИІМДІ БАСҚАРУДЫҢ АЛҒЫШАРТЫ РЕТІНДЕ

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АҢДАТПА

Зерттеудің мақсаты. Білім беру саласында сапаның жаңа элементін енгізу және сапа менеджмен-тіндегі сапа мәдениетінің маңызды аспектілерін көрсету.

Зерттеу әдістемесі. Бұл сапа, мәдениет және сапа мәдениетіне байланысты қолданыстағы әдебиеттер құрамына талдау.

Зерттеудің бірегейлігі / құндылығы – ол аймақтық ғалымдарға, ізденушілерге және университет басшыларына сапа менеджменті процестерін ұйымдағы сапа мәдениетіне сәйкес қалыптастыру не-месе сапа мәдениетінің жаңа қырларын таныстыра отырып, ұйымның мәдениетін өзгерту негізінде теориялық нұсқаулық бола алады.

Зерттеу нәтижелері. Авторлар жоғары білім жүйесінде сапаны қалыптастыру үшін сапалы мәдениетті енгізу және сапа мәдениетін оның мәдени/психологиялық және құрылымдық / басқарушылық элементтерін ескере отырып үнемі жетілдіріп отыру керек деген қорытындыға келіп отыр.

Түйін сөздер: сапа менеджменті, сапа мәдениеті, ұйымдастырушылық өзгеріс.

КУЛЬТУРА КАЧЕСТВА КАК НЕОБХОДИМОЕ УСЛОВИЕ ДЛЯ ЭФФЕКТИВНОГО УПРАВЛЕНИЯ КАЧЕСТВОМ

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Цель исследования. Представить новый элемент качества в секторе высшего образования и выделить важные аспекты культуры качества в управлении качеством.

Методология исследования– это анализ существующей литературы, связанной с качеством, культурой и культурой качества.

Оригинальность / ценность исследования заключается в том, что оно может служить теоретическим руководством для региональных ученых, академиков и руководителей университетов для формулирования процессов управления качеством в соответствии с существующей культурой качества или для изменения организаций, привнося новые аспекты культуры качества.

Результаты исследования. Авторы приходят к выводу, что для достижения реального качества в высшем образовании важно внедрить культуру качества и постоянно совершенствовать ее, принимая во внимание как культурный / психологический элемент, так и структурный / управленческий элемент культуры качества.

Ключевые слова: управление качеством, культура качества, организационные изменения.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of quality has received widespread and interested attention during the last years among academics, scholars and representatives of the higher education sector. With the discussion of the concept 'of quality', defining what 'customer' is essential. A number of authors criticize using the term 'customer' in higher education as a consumer of educational services. Ballantine outlined the main differences between higher education and business organizations. According to Dworkin, there are two distinct structures in HEIs, which encompass academic and hierarchical administrative structures [1]. As well as since university employees are professionals and academics in their disciplines, they expect more autonomy and academic freedom while transmitting knowledge and conducting research.

There is plenty of scholars, who have already defined quality in higher education and its potential customers. To gain and maintain a competitive position in an increasingly competitive market, HEIs have acknowledged the need to invest in organizational culture processes. In recent years, the public and political demand for quality education have led university managers to apply diverse managerial approaches to develop effective quality management and to stay customer-oriented institution. A number of scholars believe that a prerequisite for quality products and services is development of quality culture and organizational culture change in an organization [2, 3, 4, 5]. Thus, the present paper is an attempt to provide a conceptual framework of 'quality culture'. The paper outlines a new approach of quality management and explores available literature on defining the role of quality culture in developing effective quality management and describes the main requirements for implementing an organizational quality change.

In her analysis, G. Minazheva defines three aspects of quality education according to the report of the UNESCO Document: the first is quality of staff and study programmes, provided by a combination of teaching and research, their compliance with public demand; the second is quality of study environment and finally, quality of the infrastructure (Please refer to Figure 1).
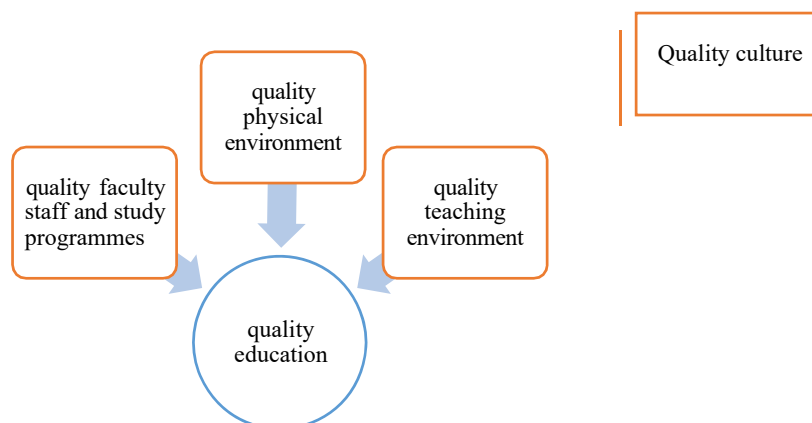
Figure 1 – Components of Quality education
Note – developed by Authors based on [6]

However, Peters and Waterman claimed that quality management could be successful and effective if processes and systems are supported by a quality culture defined in an organization, since an appropriate implementation of the soft side of management that is shared values, beliefs and staff, skills of all members of an organization is essential as well as control over the hard aspects of management (strategy, structure, systems) [7]. Quality culture in higher education is an organizational culture, which enables development of an effective and efficient quality management approach for university managers to realize objectives of higher education institution and to improve the quality of educational services. In that way, the rather new concept of quality culture can be defined as an essential part of quality management, where invisible existing values of an organization and the way employers behave is taken into consideration.

It is clear that as a part of quality education, development of quality culture in an organization is an essential approach of effective quality management. Despite, the positive interpretation of quality culture as an effective tool of quality performance in an organization, the exact meaning of the concept is subject for the discussion among regional academics, HEIs managers and quality experts. Thus, the further empirical study of the importance of quality culture in shaping the internal quality assurance system of universities from perspectives of faculty staff could add more value to the practical significance of quality culture. After entering the Bologna area, the concept of 'quality culture' has not become as a new phenomenon in Kazakhstani higher education system. However, there are still some missing gaps hampering development of favourable conditions and key working mechanisms for development of quality culture. Since, the presented paper gives a general conceptual framework and outlook to the concept of 'quality culture', the deep research studies defining the concept of quality culture taking into account features of regional environment, empirical research identifying the link between faculty staff and university management in shaping the effective quality culture, as well as thorough study exploring the most important working mechanisms of quality culture are apparent.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture. A company is a culture. A culture is a group of people united by common values and beliefs. No products neither services bind a company together. No size neither power makes a company strong, but culture, as a system of beliefs and values that everyone shares, beginning from a top to down. Every single employee feels better in culture, where he/she feels well, where his / her values and beliefs reflected [8]. Webster's New World Encyclopedia gives a common and widely- known definition for the concept of 'culture'. It describes culture as a lifestyle of definite individuals who share common behaviour and values, beliefs, customs, traditions, rules, rituals and language within an organization. Leighton & Hughes claimed that 'culture' is a shared set of beliefs, feelings and acclimatization of people carried in their mind [9]. Another group of scholars defines 'culture' as ideas, habits organized in a group and shared by each individual [10],

as well as main beliefs, thinking and assumptions created, developed in a particular group to solve external adaption and internal integration problems in regards to current and new members of the unit [11].

Quality. There is no single, absolute, agreed or universally accepted definition of the term, since it seems very hard to give a definition of quality that all experts or stakeholders can agree on.

From perspectives of political interest to the issue of quality, Dill, Brennan and Shah, Newton and Billing have shown the following objectives for managing and improving quality [12-16]:

- Accountability and transparency to stakeholders
- Allocation of public funds wisely
- Organizational change in higher education systems
- Quality improvement of higher education
- Promotion of academic mobility of students and staff
- The collaboration of universities and economic sector
- International competition among higher education institutions.

Below, the present paper has summarized the major findings of definitions given to the concept of 'quality'. Longanecker and Blanco proposed the definition of 'quality' from perspectives of academic staff and administrators and their approach to providing quality education (that is 'who and how students are taught'), rather than what students attain [17]. Another scholar defined 'quality' from perspectives of stakeholders' perceptions, quantifiable elements, design of programmes and external standards [18]. However, both studies undermined other stakeholders'' perspectives: the former - students and external stakeholders, and the latter – the perspective of students. In the literature, there are main criteria of a quality product in case of higher education:

- Competitiveness at a national and international academic area (for instance positions at rankings)
- Demand/relevance of the product (employability rate of graduates)
- Attractiveness (number of international students, and academic mobility programmes)
- The autonomy of the university
- Quality products (degree products accredited by accreditation agencies)

Lucien Bollaert, an independent quality expert, proposed the shift of paradigm of understanding the concept of 'quality' and 'quality assurance' in Table 1.

Table 1 – A paradigm of understanding quality

Former views	New views
Quality is absolute and established	Quality is relative and multi-level
One standard dominates	Quality assurance has many aspects
Quality is defined by the producer	Quality is defined by the customer
The final product plays a key role	Service – is a fundamental factor
Quality must be controlled	Quality is the results of processes
Fixed requirements for quality	Quality requirements are changing and Increasing
Quality is controlled by Office for quality	Everyone is responsible for the quality
Note – developed by authors based on source [19].	

Admittedly, potential external stakeholders define quality, since employers and society dictates the main requirements for HEIs to receive quality graduates. The European Foundation for Quality Management defined major principles and values of quality management. The main moving forces of quality management rely on effective leadership, people engagement, organization strategy, partnership and resources, which all together lead to processes, products and service productions. Please refer to Table 2.

Table 2 – The model of quality assurance develop by EFQM 2012

Moving factors			Results	
Leadership	People	Processes, production and services	Results of people	Business results
	Strategy		Results of customers	
	Partnership and resources		Results of society	
Learning, creativeness and innovation				
Note – source [20]				

Basic principles of quality assurance encompass leadership, carried out by vision, inspiration and honesty of leaders, who act as role models for their values and ethics (responsibility, people management). As well as it is worth to note the role of management which coordinates processes structured and strategically and applies factual decision-making practices; equally important, an integrated system that combines all processes and measures their realization. In the same way, belief in continuous improvement and encouragement of people who achieve organization and personal goals in a harmonized way (democratic governance).

The main concept of quality management is a shift from a traditional model of management (planning, organizing, leading and controlling) to continuous improvement. Be it higher education institution, government agencies or business units, quality culture is a very important factor for any organization to develop strong quality management.

Quality Culture. In the literature, there seems to be no general definition of 'quality' and 'quality culture'. There is plenty of discussions regarding the definition of 'quality culture' like 'quality'. Quality culture has been identified as a process of transforming quality assurance procedures into daily activities of an organization [5], whereas another scholar considers quality culture as an attitude of employers how they accept the issue of quality in daily practice [21]. Viljoen and van Waveren defined quality culture as an organizational culture which provides the responsibility of all engaged individuals for quality [4].

The literature attempts to eliminate the gap in defining the concept of quality culture by studying the notion of quality. There are five descriptions quality defined in the education sector: quality as 'exceptional', 'perfection or consistency', 'fitness for purpose', 'value for money' and 'transformation' [5]. As for the concept of 'culture', it is defined as a type of an organizational culture, which refers to the set of norms, beliefs, attitudes and customs developed within an organization [22], additionally, Berings believes psychological-cultural elements of quality culture should be shared not only by individuals, groups within an organization, as well as, by stakeholders engaged in quality processes [23].

Domovic Vidovic has provided two aspects of quality in higher education institutions Figure 2 [24].

The available literature proposes several features of building a quality culture in higher education institution [22]:

- Acceptance of quality culture philosophy by members of all levels of an organization

- Development of effective interaction between university management, faculty staff and external stakeholders.

- Focus on the importance of human resources

- Motivation procedures as rewarding, promotion and recognizing of outstanding employees.

- Implementation of a strong system of values and belief within an organization.

- Engagement of all internal and external stakeholders in the process of quality assurance

- Development of feelings of responsibility for decision-making and quality education among all individuals of an institution. (the last two have been presented by author).

bottom-up
internal quality
assurance and
quality culture

top-down -
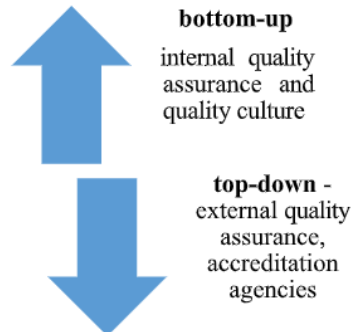external quality
assurance,
accreditation
agencies

Figure 2 – Aspects of quality education in higher education
Note – developed by authors based on source [24]

Generally, quality culture is accepted as a set of values within a group that directs an organization for improvements, which contributes to the development of effective approach for quality [23]. Several authors have attempted to define 'quality culture' as a part of an organizational culture, where every member of each unit is responsible for quality [21]. Schein believes that 'quality culture' should encompass various aspects of organizational culture, like assumptions, membership, interactions, while Robbins claims it as "the social glue that helps to hold an organization together" [25].

The relation between "Quality Culture" and "Quality Assurance". The chronology of reforms and transformations taking place in the field of education shows that quality assurance of education is initially inherent in the academic environment. Assessment of the quality of education, which dates back to the 80s of the last century, gradually acquired a social function. The governments of several European countries refused centralized regulation of the higher education system and announced their readiness to provide more autonomy to universities, if they guarantee the quality of education. As a result of the World Declaration adopted in Paris, independent quality assurance associations have been created in European countries. These are civil society institutions that form "feedback" mechanisms for the interests of society, universities, students, employers and the state. They were called upon to conduct external examinations of the university in the forms of assessment, accreditation and audit. Independent associations generate information for consumers. Their activity contributes to the elimination of unscrupulous producers of educational services, helps to adapt the educational programs of universities to the needs and trends in the labour markets. The joint documents of the education ministers of European countries set a specific goal for the countries participating in the Bologna process - to develop existing quality assurance systems.

Development of a quality assurance system is realized in two levels: the institutional level – development of an internal quality assurance system and at the national level – development of an external assessment and quality assurance system [26].

Quality assurance is one of the most important functions of modern higher education. Formation of assessment principles and the development of quality culture in higher education institutions are necessary. Several authors have attempted to define quality culture as the paper has already discussed, however, the academics claim that quality is not a new phenomenon, is a process of making a change in already existing quality culture that is why development of culture should not require bringing a new element into organizations. Despite some arguments about the nature of culture in organizations, there is an invisible bond between the culture of an organization and quality education to improve organizational performance [5].

The broad accepted use of the term 'quality culture' refers to the definition of the European University Association (EUA), which states culture as following: "An organizational culture that intends to enhance quality permanently and is characterized by two distinct elements: a cultural/psychological element of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitment towards quality and a structural/managerial element with defined

processes that enhance quality and aim at coordinating individual efforts (EUA, 2006). Besides, different dimensions of quality culture have been proposed. The first refers to the 'hard' aspect, which covers quality management, strategies, processes and 'soft' dimensions that encompass shared values, beliefs and commitment and skills of staff. Another aspect of higher education organizational culture refers to 'the collective, mutually shaping pattern of norms, values, practices, beliefs and assumptions that guide the behaviour of individuals and groups in HEI and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off campus′ [27]. As can be seen from the figure 3 there are two aspects of quality culture in an organization. It should be noted that the implementation of the soft aspect of management is as important as hard aspects of management (Figure 3).

Quality culture

Structural / managerial element

Communication
Participation Trust

Cultural / psychological element

Tools and processes to define, measure, evaluate, assure and enhance quality

Individual-level: personal commitment to strive for quality

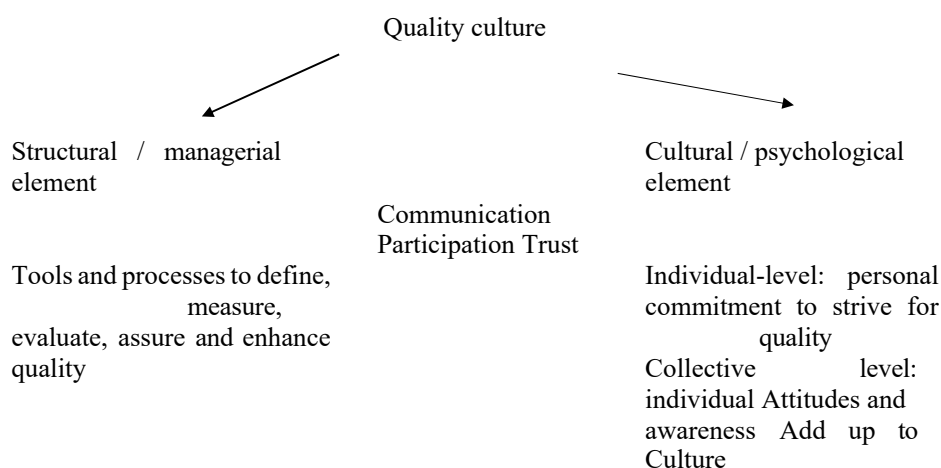Collective level: individual Attitudes and awareness Add up to Culture

Figure 3 – Elements of a quality culture
Note – source [28]

The importance of developing a quality culture within an organization is that it is an invisible component of quality assurance mechanism, which creates favourable conditions and environment to provide quality for organization development and improvement. Quality assurance is a management approach, which focuses on quality organization and engagement of all interested parties to satisfy their expectations. In the European Higher Education Area, quality assurance is the main element of the Bologna process. The goal of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) – officially launched in 2010 (Budapest-Vienna Declaration, 2010) is to ensure that the higher education system of all participating countries and universities is at the same level, ensuring student mobility and achieving mutual recognition of diplomas. The principles of quality assurance in the EHEA are outlined in the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015).

Quality assurance in higher education consists of:
- External quality assurance
- Internal quality assurance

External quality assurance system assesses and controls an internal quality assurance system. The main aspect of quality assurance according to ESG and principles of European standards – only HEI is responsible for quality education.

Currently, most universities often consider external quality assurance conducted by an accreditation agency as the main and most important part of the quality assurance system. Often the goal is to fulfil some external requirements, rather than developing own internal quality assurance system. The internal quality system is sometimes formal, fragmented, or even absent in many cases. Sometimes in the perception of university staff the main responsibility for the quality education lies with external partners - quality assurance agencies, the state, the ministry.

Nevertheless, quality assurance is the responsibility of higher education institutions and the formation of quality culture is an important step to develop an internal quality assurance of institution.

Pavel Adina-Petruta assigned the description of quality culture in three levels. The starting point of levels is normative, which considers beliefs, values and norms related to quality. The next comes strategic level, where quality culture is developed through decision-making processes, planning and organizations of processes. The real visibility of quality culture is on the operative level when definite concepts and measures are implemented to improve quality.

There have been so far extensive discussions and debates regarding the components of quality assurance mechanisms, mainly in regards to internal quality assurance. Building a strong quality culture no more requires the development of single internal quality assurance system, but also mutual trust and common beliefs among all units of higher education institution developed systematically, action by action, without force and bureaucracy.

CONCLUSION

To summarize the present paper, effective quality management in an organization encompasses both cultural/psychological element of organizational culture and structural/managerial element as well. This paper can serve as a theoretical guideline for prospective university managers to define if there is a need to make changes in existing organizational culture to manage university effectively and to reshape their organizational structures. Additionally, the concept of 'quality culture' should not be neglected by university management, since the backbone and the brick of organization is not a system, neither processes nor standards, rather human capital. Implementation of successful quality management practices stem from the engagement of both internal (administrators and staff) and external stakeholders (employers, partners, accreditation agencies and society) into the process of quality management. If the basic component of external quality assurance is accreditation, then the principal part of internal quality assurance is development of quality culture within an organization.

To summarize, the current paper opens new research questions in terms of theoretical and empirical studies. The results of the research paper provides valuable information about the concept of a quality culture and its organizational elements for academics, scholars, as well as for candidates of a PhD degree programme. Since today, HEIs are facing economic, political and social challenges of globalization in positioning itself at the labour and education arena, the development of effective internal quality assurance system encompassing all organizational aspects and elements of quality culture is essential.

The practical value of the paper is that it rises a considerable number of issues subject for further discussions and studies. The university administration has realized greater importance of effective quality management to ensure quality education and to be competitive on educational and labour area. Thus, this study gives a new insight for university managers and practitioners to consider the existing environmental conditions of an organization before setting new strategies and goals to develop effective internal quality assurance system.

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SUMMARY

In the presented paper, the concepts of "quality", "culture" and "quality culture" are analyzed and the key elements of a quality culture are presented. The authors claim that, for effective quality management in an organization, the study and development of both cultural-psychological and structural-managerial elements of organizational culture is an important aspect of management in an organization. In conclusion of the article, the authors recommend the university leadership do not neglect the concept of "quality culture", since the main foundation of the organization is not a system, processes or standards, but human capital.

ТҮЙІНДЕМЕ

Бұл жұмыста «сапа», «мәдениет» және «сапа мәдениеті» ұғымдары талданып, сапа мәдениетінің негізгі элементтері ұсынылған. Авторлар ұйымдағы сапаны тиімді басқару үшін ұйымдық мәдениеттің мәдени-психологиялық және құрылымдық-басқарушылық элементтерін зерттеу және дамыту ұйымдағы менеджменттің маңызды аспектісі болып саналады деп атап көрсеткен. Мақаланың соңында авторлар университет басшылығына «сапа мәдениеті» ұғымын назардан тыс қалдырмауға кеңес береді, өйткені ұйымның негізі жүйе, процестер немесе стандарттар емес, адам капиталы болып табылады.

РЕЗЮМЕ

В данной работе были анализированы понятия «качество», «культура» и «культура качества» и приведены основные элементы культуры качества. Авторы отмечают что для эффективного управления качеством в организации изучение и развитие как культурно-психологических, так и структурно-управленческих элементов организационной культуры является важным аспектом управления в организации. В заключении статьи, авторы рекомендуют руководству университета не пренебрегать концепцией «культуры качества», поскольку основной фундамент основа организации является не система, не процессы и не стандарты, а человеческий капитал.

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