

Leadership of quality in higher education

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Copenhagen Business School (CBS) has developed a leadership-based approach to the development of a quality culture. CBS has been fortunate in having a stable senior-management team for over a decade, with a long-serving President who has facilitated a dynamic and evolving approach to quality assurance and improvement. Quality has been seen as an ongoing process of change at CBS, not a once-and-for all event. It has been a focal point of activity increasingly since 1994 and its position as a strategic focal point has been reinforced in the latest strategy document adopted by the Board of Directors in December 2008.

CBS has undertaken a flexible and multi-faceted approach to quality, with a major emphasis on reflective and responsive leadership. The key has been to see quality as a consequence of as well as a contributor to a process of continuous change.

The establishment of a quality culture and a comprehensive and operational quality system need leaders who care for quality, have an international orientation regarding quality, embed the quality aims in the vision, mission and strategic goals of the university, leaders who are able to motivate and inspire people in the organisation to create a balanced top-down/bottom-up approach to quality and who base the institutional quality assurance and quality enhancement on the values and the culture of the institution.

Quality in a wider context

As a university, Copenhagen Business School (CBS) places itself in the international, academic community of research and education. However, university leaders must be able to operate both in a national, regional, European and global context. Developments at national level are primarily determined by the political system, whereas developments at regional, European and global level are driven both by the political system and by changing opportunities in the market. Thus national, regional, European and global contexts are related to the academic system, the political system and the market which has an important impact on quality practices.

In 1992, a national evaluation agency for higher education was set up by the Danish Ministry of Education with the aim of evaluating programmes nationwide over a seven-year cycle. The later Vice-President at CBS with the overall responsibility for quality was one of the founders of the agency in her capacity as Chair of the National Educational Advisory Board for the Humanities and Theology. According to the new University Act of July 2003, Danish universities are still obliged to conduct subject and programme evaluations but are free to use the Danish agency or any other recognised international agency. Although the aim of the 2003 University Act, which replaces all elected leaders with appointed leaders and the former Senate with a Board of Directors having an external majority and an external chair, was to give more autonomy to the universities, all degree programmes offered by the university were subject to the approval of now the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. This continued until autumn 2007 with the establishment of the Danish Accreditation Institute, an independent agency with the aim to assure and prove quality and relevance of disciplines and programmes at Danish higher education institutions. The academic system 3+2+3, the later Bologna system, had already been introduced in Denmark with the 1992 law.

As one of the signatories of the Bologna Declaration 1999, Denmark has been active implementing the aims of the Bologna Process. However, with the strong focus on external quality assurance of the subject and programme level most Danish universities have not had strong external motivation to put emphasis on quality at the institutional level. After the Berlin Communiqué 2003 where the Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the EHEA stressed “ that consistent with the principle of institutional autonomy, the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system with the national quality framework” and after the Bologna signatories at their meeting in Bergen 2005 adopted the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area as proposed by ENQA this might have lead to a focus on the institutional level when the Danish Accreditation Institute was established in 2007 but this, unfortunately, did not happen.

CBS, like other Danish universities is faced with a situation of stronger cooperation but also stronger competition. There is increased competition for funding for research and a global market for students. To be prepared for these global challenges quality plays a crucial role. With comprehensive and continuous quality work since the beginning of the 90’s, CBS has tried to prepare itself to meet these challenges at different levels.

Events crucial for the internal quality development at CBS

CBS began its long journey of development as a learning University in the mid-1990s. In the early 1990s one might characterise it as a teacher-led, didactic institution in which students had very high numbers of lectures a week with little in the way of interactive sessions; student-centred learning was not a significant part of the learning process. The institution was also scattered around the city, in not particularly impressive buildings, and there was no noticeable student learning community: students tended to turn up to lectures and then dissipate without much intra-student interaction. Over 15 years this has completely changed, yet there is no intention for the University to consider the job done. Continuous improvement is still at the core of University strategy for the future. CBS has learned and continues to learn from experience.

The following events have been crucial for the leaders and the quality work at CBS. These are:

1. The development of CBS as a “Learning University”
2. The CRE- Audit 1996 and the Follow-Up Visit 1998
3. The adaptation of the stakeholder related concept and definition of ‘quality, launched 1993 by Harvey and Green.
4. The involvement of external expertise

The “Learning University”

In the Self-Evaluation report for the CRE-Audit 1996, CBS sets up as one of its strategic goals to develop as a “Learning University”. According to the Self-Evaluation report CBS was aware that:

“the image of CBS as a “learning university” requires a more specific definition of this concept, not the least of which is a clarification of how a number of basic and necessary prerequisites can come about: How is the type of recruitment and ongoing competency development controlled? How is organizational innovation developed so that CBS acquires the ability to “think the unthinkable”? How are reward systems and structures for incentives built in to support the strategic development at CBS? These are all issues to be confronted. Universities must deliver an effective and attractive framework within which researchers,

students, and the environment can be brought together and inspire one another. The demand for evaluation, systematic analysis, and coordination must be balanced with the need for experimentation, creative culture, room for impulsive action, and non-traditional ideas to provide the student-of-today with the ballast needed to be an employee and manager in the corporation-of-tomorrow. In the future, CBS will hopefully be a creative and innovative university with carefully selected information systems, with an understanding of its purpose that enables effective follow-up processes initiated at all levels by the people in the organization."

The CRE- Audit 1996 and the Follow-Up Visit 1998

No doubt that the very supportive CRE-Audit and the follow-up visit two years later stimulated and influenced the strategic process at CBS significantly. The self-evaluation, the site visits and the dialogue with the evaluation team were a turning point for the university. It allowed CBS, at all levels, to start thinking collectively about the way forward for developing an internal quality culture. The follow-up visit was not a mechanistic "tick the box" exercise, but the experts (the same as for the first visit) gave CBS ideas to help the university move to the next stage of its development as a "learning university".

According to the CBS Strategic Update from 1998 and until to-day the term, in the CBS context, originates from the combination of the classic notion of the university as a forum for learning and knowledge and the modern concept of "the learning organization". CBS strives to develop a learning environment based on learning rather than teaching and individual talent support rather than mass education. At the same time, CBS wants to develop as a learning organisation featuring flexibility, innovative capacity, a balanced mix of systematic analysis and experiments, external and internal peer reviews an ongoing quality development. CBS views the capacity for continuous organisational renewal as a key requirement for building an innovative learning environment for students and researchers.

However, the strategy depends on development of new pedagogical methods, ability to combine research-based teaching and experience-based learning, increasing use of multimedia-aided learning, focus on mobilizing the students' resources for the learning process, project-based courses with interdisciplinary groups and action-learning programmes.

For the organisation as a whole, the strategy depends on commitment to continued quality development and competence enhancement, building external and internal networks, creating an innovative organisational culture for all staff groups, encouraging venture spirit and testing new organisation principles.

A stakeholder related concept of quality

Another turning point was the introduction in 1994 of a quality system based on the stakeholder-related concept of quality as defined by Harvey and Green (1993). According to this definition, quality means different things to different people and is relative to processes or outcomes. The widely varying conceptualisations of quality are grouped into five discrete but interrelated categories. Quality can be viewed as exceptional, as perfection, as fitness for purpose, as value for money and as transformation.

Since 1994, CBS has launched projects and quality activities within all five categories as part of its continuous quality improvement process.

Use of external expertise

Since 1994 CBS has gained valuable feed-back for the further development of the internal quality assurance and quality development from peers on the site visit teams of various external evaluations. The leaders themselves have participated as peers on evaluation teams with the possibility to share knowledge about quality improvement with colleagues throughout Europe.

The most valuable and continuous exchange of ideas and innovative input for its quality work CBS has gained from using Professor Lee Harvey as external expert from 1994. Lee Harvey has visited CBS regularly and interviewed people (students, faculty, decision makers, director of study boards, leaders at various levels, support units (Teaching and Learning Committee and CBS Learning Lab) and external stakeholders. After each visit the observations and recommendations for further quality enhancement was submitted to CBS in a report.

The aims of CBS' quality work

The quality work undertaken by CBS and integrated in the CBS vision, mission and strategic goals, aims at

- develop CBS as a learning university
- empower CBS students to be reflective practitioners
- educate students who are competitive on both the national and international job market
- develop an internal quality culture safeguarding institutional autonomy and public accountability
- stimulate internal capacity for self-reflection and change
- promote the exchange of ideas, experiences and good practice

The Quality system developed at CBS

The background and knowledge about quality both at national and European level made it challenged for CBS Vice-President Bente Kristensen, taking over her office in 1994, to try to balance external quality assurance with internal quality assurance and quality improvement. She adopted the above-mentioned Green & Harvey stakeholder-related concept of 'quality' in the following way:

Quality in the sense of 'exceptional'

According to the CBS mission statement, CBS aims to be an internationally recognised business university at a European top level which means quality in the sense of exceptional. For CBS as an international university, for academic partners in national, regional and international networks, for corporate partners, both national and international, for the Ministry and Parliament funding CBS and for both national and international students deciding at which university they want to study, it is very important to know how exceptional CBS is. The learning features or quality assurance activities used for that purpose are:

- CRE-Audit (1996), CRE Follow-Up Visit (1998); (CRE now EUA)
- EQUIS Accreditation (1999–2000);
- EQUIS Re-Accreditation 2004–2005;
- ESMU Benchmarking Programme (since 2002)
- Internally initiated research evaluation at departmental level (ongoing since 1994).
- EVA- evaluations (at national level) on subject and programme level – latest 2005
- The NOQA Comparative Analysis of Systematic Quality Work in Nordic Higher Education Institutions 2004–2005
- AMBA- Accreditation 2007
- AACSB – Accreditation (ongoing)
- Ranking
- National programme accreditation from 2008

The ownership of these activities is placed with various people within the university depending on relevant qualifications and formerly under supervision of the Vice-President, now under supervision of either the Dean for Education or the Dean for Research.

CBS has participated in the ESMU benchmarking in the following areas:

<i>ESMU benchmarking subject areas</i>	<i>CBS result</i>	<i>Best result</i>
Strategic Management, Policy and Strategy (2001)	5	5
Management of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (2001)	4	4+
Marketing the University (2001)	3	3
Management Information Systems (2002)	3.8	4
Internal Quality Assurance (2002)	5	5
Student Services (2002)	4	4.5
E-Learning (2003)	2	5
External Funding (2003)	4	5
Institutional Research (2003)	3	4
Research Management (2004)	5	5
The University Creating a Regional Knowledge Base (2004)	4	4
Change Management (2004)	4	4
Internationalization (2005)	4	4
Strategic Partnership (2005)	4	4
Governance and Structures (2005)	4	4
Designing new masters and doctorates (2005)	4	4
Marketing higher education institutions (2006)	4	4
Innovative teaching and learning (2006)	5	5

Source: ESMU Assessors Reports 2001-2006.

As will be evident from the above, CBS has generally done comparatively well in the benchmarking reviews often being best or second best in class. However, both in these cases and in cases where CBS has done less well, the benchmarking projects have stimulated reflection and led to decisive action learning from good practice from the other participants getting better scores than CBS. The report on Marketing the University

was a contributing factor in the decision to establish a strengthened communication platform; the report on e-Learning has resulted in an ongoing effort to formulate an overall operational CBS strategy for e-Learning; and the report on Student Services has contributed to the establishment of a major initiative on student services. The report on Institutional Research has, inspired by the University of Amsterdam, resulted in an eight-page newsletter published four times a year by a newly established Business Intelligence Unit.

Quality in the sense of 'perfection'

In a CBS context, the notion of quality as perfection refers to the strategic development as a learning university. It is important to CBS that the staff, academic and administrative have the competences to manage their job in a perfect way and are enabled and encouraged to keep improving the effectiveness of their professional effort. The stakeholders are: academic staff, administrative staff and students. The quality activities are:

- Staff recruitment
- Annual appraisal interviews at individual level
- Staff development supported by CBS Learning Lab
- Benchmarking (internal and external)
- Development of a CBS quality culture (places the bonus on everyone to maximize the quality of their services and outputs)
- A campus-wide quality development project on student services.

At CBS a special unit, the CBS Learning Lab is responsible for staff development in relation to teaching and learning. The internal benchmarking is a transfer of 'good practice' from one environment to another as part of the staff development programmes. The external benchmarking refers to some of the ESMU themes of relevance to the CBS administration.

At CBS there is a simultaneous concern for promoting quality activities through propagation of a quality culture, the nurturing of responsibility among the greatest possible number of 'actors', encouragement of initiatives and innovation and the spread of good practice. The overall aim is: organisational learning.

CBS sees 'quality culture' in institutions as more important than formal quality assurance procedures. The emphasis is on development of learning rather than institution of bureaucratic procedures. Quality at CBS is seen as a concept of multiple significance, distinct for each of the various stakeholders involved. To a large extent, quality development or quality improvement is a question of information and motivation and thus of strengthening the mutual confidence between the levels and environments involved. In the context of CBS, quality initiatives are seen as part of a process of continuous quality improvement, satisfying the various stakeholders that these initiatives lead to change and improvement. Creating a quality culture requires providing a context in which to facilitate quality improvement.

Quality in the sense of 'fitness for purpose'/relevance/employability

To the stakeholders in the business community, to the employers of CBS graduates and to national and

international corporate partners, the notion of quality as 'fitness for purpose' is important. CBS uses the following quality initiatives striving for increased partnership with business:

- Dialogue with the business community;
- Dialogue with corporate partners
- Dialogue with graduates (alumni)
- Advisory Boards;
- Networking;
- Career Office (graduate placement, individual career plans for students)
- Internships/mentorships
- Life-long learning

Many degree programmes and many departments attach advisory boards to their activities to have a continuous dialogue with the business community about the profile of knowledge and skills of their graduates. The ownership of these activities is with the departments or the study boards. As part of its strategy, CBS has set up several business research centres and a great deal of the networking with the business community within applied research occurs within these centres. An important group of stakeholders is also the CBS alumni, who give feedback to CBS about the quality of their education after having gained some job experience. CBS has a formulated alumni policy with the ownership of the corporate relation officer together with the Communications Department.

Quality in the sense of 'value for money'/accountability – payback to stakeholders

Although CBS has a very strong focus on enhancement or improvement, it is also necessary for CBS to demonstrate accountability as part of the quality management. Accountability means the requirement to demonstrate responsible actions to one or more external constituencies. These may be: governments providing funds to CBS, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Parliament, taxpayers, students following degree programmes and courses offered by CBS, graduates using their knowledge and skills from CBS in a job situation and employers offering jobs to CBS graduates. All these examples refer to quality as 'value for money'. The Danish Evaluation Institute's (former the Danish Centre for Quality Assurance and Evaluation of Higher Education) self-adopted strategy has been to combine the perspective of improvement with that of accountability. The Institute has not had a substantial impact on the continuous internal quality monitoring at the institutional level, although the Danish evaluation model does provide a great deal of information that could form the basis for very useful procedures for internal quality monitoring including students, graduates and employers. As mentioned above the independent Danish Accreditation Agency took over in 2007 the responsibility to accredit both new and existing disciplines and programmes on a cyclical basis. At CBS, greater responsiveness to external demands for accountability, transparency and credibility is not seen as an antithesis to self-regulation but, rather, as an element of public responsibility, safeguarding autonomy.

The quality assurance activities are:

- External evaluations by the Danish Evaluation Institute now replaced by external accreditation by

the Danish Accreditation Agency (ACE Denmark)

- Performance indicators
- Performance agreement between the Ministry and each university
- Internal evaluations: feedback to students on webpage
- Multiple focus group interviews with employers and alumni regarding drop-out rates, curriculum development, competencies of graduates
- Bi-annual qualitative study of the “learning environment” at CBS

It is important to establish a proper balance between internal improvement functions and external accountability functions. Several CBS disciplines and programmes have been subject to external evaluation. The study board in question has been responsible for the self-evaluation report and organising the peer-review visit. The recommendations of the final public report have been dealt with by the relevant study board. Performance indicators have been set up within several areas, for example, research publication, student exchange, PhD production etc., and various staff members are responsible for reporting on actual achievements.

CBS sees the "Performance Agreement" with the Ministry of Research and the Ministry of Education, now taken over by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, as the first step towards the principle of 'management by objectives'. CBS must annually report on the fulfilment of the success criteria set up in the Agreement, but so far this has not been linked to funding. With the annual reporting, CBS is also in a position to argue for changes of the aims, means and success criteria. Aims, means and success criteria within all strategic areas of CBS have been formulated in the Performance Agreement, and with the annual reporting system it is possible to keep the aims, means and success criteria up to date. The content of the Performance Agreement is communicated throughout the university via senior and middle management.

Quality in the sense of 'transformation'¹

As a learning university, the most important aim of the teaching and learning at CBS is to enhance and empower students, which refers to the notion of quality as 'transformation'. CBS needs to ensure that students develop knowledge, skills and abilities, but also that they are empowered as critical lifelong learners. In 2008, the Board of Directors approved the Learning Strategy developed by CBS Learning Lab. With this new strategy the following views on students and teachers were codified:

- Students are *partners*
- Students have an identity and care about their *learning process*
- Teachers are persons who *facilitate* students' learning processes
- Teachers discuss with students their way to *achieve their goals*
- Students learn in relation to their *past* experience and their *thoughts* about their *future life and career*

The stakeholders are: the students, the teachers/researchers and the external examiners safeguarding the learning outcomes of the students. Quality activities in this respect are:

- Continuous quality improvement;
- A pedagogical profile according to the CBS Learning Strategy leading to student-centered learning (transformative learning)
- Competence profiles and impact on curriculum development
- Ongoing student evaluation of disciplines and programmes
- Benchmarking (internal and external).
- Use of an external expert ongoing since 1994

A crucial element in the development of transformative learning is staff development. All assistant professors take part in a development programme that has a compulsory core and a range of optional elements. The core focuses on four dimensions of the assistant professor's progress, against which they are assessed. The four are the pedagogical, personal, didactic and developmental. The first relates to the assistant professors' understanding of pedagogy and their ability to structure learning sessions, communicate and manage dialogue. The personal includes voice projection, body language, facial expression, timing, empathy, contact with the students and shyness. The didactic includes the analytical and practical understanding of basic concepts, such as, the ability to formulate teaching and examination goals, to adapt theme to the level of the students and to be able to take account of resources. The final dimension involves the ability to appraise one's own development and potential as a teacher. Overall, the assistant professor is evaluated on the interrelationship between academic content, objectives, mode of teaching and level of study and how the assistant professor's activities impact on student learning.

Conclusion: Distributed leadership

CBS has adopted a multi-faceted approach to quality, with a strong emphasis on the learning university, both in the sense of the University as a learning organisation and as an academic environment focused on enabling student learning. The key throughout all this has been the primacy of leadership of quality not the management of quality. For more than a decade the senior managers at CBS have had a clear desire to take the university forward, to develop a culture of continuous improvement and to transform the institution into a major European business school. This has involved a long-term vision, which has been helped by a period of relative stability in senior positions. Although the vision of the leadership and the enthusiasm and encouragement of the senior team are important, the transformation of CBS could not have been achieved without significant leaders at all levels of the organisation, including department heads, innovative lecturers and committed students.

It is important that the quality system chosen is not a bureaucratic burden but a system able to inspire and motivate stakeholders. For the leaders there must be a drive, imagination and desire to use quality assurance and quality enhancement as necessary tools to prove effectiveness and efficiency within the organisation.

Leaders are effective if their integrity and trust is respected at all levels in the university. They need to be good communicators and engaged in quality initiatives at both national, European and global level enabling them to get inspiration for further development of their own practices. While this applies to senior managers in the institution, it also applies to leaders at all levels if a quality culture is to develop.

At CBS, as in other Danish universities, divided leadership exists for full-time academic staff members. The Head of Department is responsible for the human resources of the department, having the right competences in order to do their job. The law states 'the head of department shall be an acknowledged

researcher and have teaching experience' (MSTI, 2007, para 17). At the same time the Study Board (discussed below) is responsible for the quality of the teaching and learning. If student questionnaires or other kind of formative or summative evaluation reveals that a teacher does not perform in an adequate way the Study Board Director must inform the Head of Department who will arrange for the necessary staff development or other kind of support.

The development of CBS into a high quality learning university has been achieved because it has encouraged leadership and ownership of quality. Rather than impose a set of bureaucratic quality procedures, CBS has adopted an initiative-led approach, encouraging academics, administrators and students at all levels to get involved in a variety of quality-related projects. This process has worked with those innovators and groups who want to develop ideas and approaches and in many circumstances they have acted as leaders in the development of a quality culture.

One area where distributed leadership has been particularly effective is the role of students, especially on study boards. Each programme has a study board, a little like the boards of study programmes in UK universities. However, in Denmark, and particularly at CBS, study boards are far more influential than their British counterparts. The study boards at CBS consist of between 4 and 10 members, depending on the size of the programme. Membership is made up of 50 per cent academics and 50 per cent students. Members are elected to the boards by their peers. Boards meet regularly (approximately monthly) and their primary function is to address issues that arise and to plan the development of the programme. The study boards have, within Danish law and institutional mission, considerable power to affect the nature and direction of study programmes. The law, as set out in the Ministerial order (MSTI 2007, para 18), states:

- ...(2) Each study board shall comprise equal numbers of representatives of the academic staff and students, selected by and from the academic staff and students respectively.
- (3) The study board shall select from among its members a chairman from the academic staff and a vice-chairman from the students.
- (4) The study board shall recommend a head of studies to the dean....
- (5) In co-operation with the study board, the head of studies shall undertake the practical organisation of teaching and tests and other assessment forming part of the exams. The head of studies shall approve the problem formulation and submission deadline for the Master's thesis, as well as a plan for the supervision of the student.
- (6) The study board shall ensure the organisation, realisation and development of the study programme and teaching. Its main objectives are to:
 - 1) ensure and develop the quality of the study programme and the teaching, and to follow up on evaluations of the programme and teaching
 - 2) produce proposals for curricula and changes thereto
 - 3) approve the organisation of teaching and tests as well as other assessment forming part of the exams
 - 4) process applications concerning credit transfers, including credits transferred in advance and exemptions
 - 5) make all statements on all matters of importance to the study programmes and teaching within the area and discuss issues related to the study programme and the teaching as presented by the Rector or the person authorised by the Rector to do so....

Hence, student participation is not just nominal, as in many countries, but a potent force in change (Riddersholm and Kjersner, 2002).

Thus, in conclusion, CBS has been on a long quality journey in which leadership rather than management or bureaucracy has been the watchword of quality. A quality culture developed that approached the ideal of

being 'invisible', part of the every-day landscape. Strong and stable senior leadership along with a distributed leadership including students, based around an initiative approach that encouraged and supported new ideas and gave those involved delegated responsibility and trust, have been at the root of the transformation of CBS. The institution has developed, going from strength to strength, with a string of international awards and recognitions for its quality work. The University is not resting on its laurels. Its next stage is to create a completely integrated total quality process.

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