

QUALITY MATTER FOR (INDONESIA) PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

Quality in higher education is nowadays becoming an important aspect for universities in order for them to participate in improving Indonesia competitiveness by mean of improving human development index. However, quality itself is not a simple term to be understood. Therefore the main objective of this paper is to elaborate quality matter especially for Private Higher Education Institution. It is expected that this paper can provide another insight for private Higher Education Institution to improve the quality. This paper tries to approach the quality by understanding its philosophy as well as its practical approach in Industry. Of course, there are always rooms for improvement.

Keywords: Quality, Higher Education Institution

1. INTRODUCTION

Baskoro (2006) has discussed several terms of quality in industrial context. However, Baskoro (2006) was not discussed the possibility to explore the same concept to Higher Education Institution (HEI). Quality as well as innovation, according to Baskoro (2006), was a promising strategy because quality as well as innovation, if successful, can give promising rewards to them. This paper tries to use similar argument to build up reason for quality in Private Higher Education Institution (P-HEI). The reasoning in Baskoro (2006) was used to develop framework of thinking in establishing quality strategy for P-HEI. The reason is that P-HEI in Indonesia is nowadays struggling with two big issues, i.e., downsizing student body, and low quality. Therefore this paper addresses quality matter as the main topic.

The main objective of this paper is to elaborate quality concept in P-HEI. This paper concerns that to achieve the objective that fits with Indonesia Higher Education system; therefore it is important to understand the role of Indonesia HEI. The role of Indonesian HEI is called "*Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi*". *Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi* consists of three main duties i.e. education, research, and community services (Indonesian Ministry of Higher Education, 2004). This role indicates that every HEI, registered in Directorate Higher Education (DGHE) of Government of Indonesia (GOI), must fulfill the main role and obey the duties. Therefore under the law of GOI, a university must do education, research, and community service regardless the type of universities.

2. METHODS

This paper explicitly utilizes descriptive analysis as a methodology to build up the line of reasoning. Several best practices from different countries related to quality of HEI have been studied. The cases both from developing and developed countries were studied and then benchmark with the HEI situation in Indonesia therefore the gap can be seen and conclusion can be drawn from there. The study

compares two different approach of quality, i.e. quality in term of industrial and quality in term of HEI. There can be found similarity as well as differentiation. What makes they are different also been studied to get insight and understanding of the real quality of HEI. The research question to be answered in this paper is “is industrial quality approach can be implemented directly to HEI?”, if it is not “why”. The following are some important part and discussion of the study.

2.1 What Is Quality? (Ambiguity of) Quality in Indonesia HEI

Quality is nowadays become an important objective and even important word for HEI because it represents the level of excellence. However, the terminology of quality is still ambiguous and not exactly defined because it has many interpretations. Therefore it is important to have clear definition of quality. Many references have discussed broadly about quality, whether to mean for a product or services. For example Baskoro (2006) defined quality for a product consists of nine dimensions of attributes. They are: performance (product primary operating characteristics), features (supplementary characteristics of a product), reliability (product consistency over time), conformance (meeting industry or established standard), durability (measure of product useful life), serviceability (ease-of-repair), aesthetics (product appearance), response (timeliness or professionalism), and reputation.

In the definition of Baskoro (2006) the product is defined clearly because it is a thing. However, for HEI the product is different than what has been defined as Quality in Baskoro (2006). Therefore, before attempting to define the term of quality for HEI, it is important to clearly understand the product. In fact it is confusing because it is not clear for HEI what the “product” and who the “client” is. Is the student, the product? Is the graduate, the product? Is the curriculum, the product? Or is the program, the product? Therefore it is reasonable to say that actually HEI has multiple products and multiple clients.

Commonly, in the discussion of quality for HEI the reference from Green (1994) is often used. Green (1994) defined six dimension of quality for HEI. They are quality as: excellence, fitness for purpose, a threshold, added value, value for money and satisfaction of the client.

The quality as excellence indicates that being excellent is a measure of quality. Therefore promoting quality is promoting excellence. However, it must be understood that being excellence may be different for every university. It is because excellence is also related to uniqueness and identity of the university. As a result, it is impossible to build excellence of a university similar to other university. So, a university cannot be a Harvard, Stanford in USA or Oxford, Cambridge in England or TU-Eindhoven, Universiteit Leiden in The Netherlands. In short, to have quality a university must build up its own excellence.

The quality as fitness for purpose indicates that quality relates to the process. It is about quality of the process. Therefore the level of quality depends on the level of objective/goal being set by a university. If the set of objective is too low, it will be easy to achieve it. On the other hand, if the set is too high it can be difficult to achieve it. Therefore, the point of this dimension is about making improvement on the process. As long as there is good sign of improvement in a university, the quality is only a matter of time.

The quality as a threshold indicates that quality relates to meeting a threshold. However, the threshold itself cannot be fixed. Threshold depends on the external factors, therefore it always changes. Another drawback is that setting threshold according to strict standard may hinder innovations and creativity because the focus shifted to meeting the compliance of the standard. In fact, university nowadays requires much creativity and innovation in order to survive.

The quality as added value indicates that quality relates to value added to the students during their education. Therefore, the most important measure of the quality is what students have learnt in order to get added value. Logically, classical learning method that measure added value based on hard knowledge, represented by courses, may not be related to added value required in real life. It is simply, the complexity

of life is different than before, therefore learning method that able to add value to students beyond hard knowledge is important.

The quality as value for money indicates that quality relates to efficiency. It measures outputs against inputs. As long as it is efficient, measure in term of money, the quality is considered good.

The satisfaction of the client indicates that quality relates to satisfaction of student. It is only possible if the “student” is considered as a costumer. In fact, the student is not always a customer. It is said having quality when it meets the expectations of the costumer. Simply the measure of quality is customer satisfaction. Therefore, to achieve satisfaction is to meet the student needs. This concept maybe acceptable if the student is (treated as) a customer with mature personality, because if they don’t then their needs maybe unacceptable by university. If so, satisfaction may not be achieved.

Another almost similar reference is by Campell and Rozsnayi (2002) and Najafabadi *et al.* (2008). They have defined the quality concept of higher education in several ways:

Quality as excellence is considered to be the traditional academic view that holds as its goal to be the best. Quality as zero errors is defined most easily in mass industry in which product specifications can be established in detail, and standardized measurements of uniform products can show conformity to them. As the products of higher education, the graduates, are not expected to be identical, this view is not always considered to be applicable in higher education. Quality as fitness for purposes approach requires that the product or service has conformity with customer needs, requirements, or desires. Quality as transformation concept focuses firmly on the learners: the better the higher education institution, the more it achieves the goal of empowering students with specific skills, knowledge and attitudes that enable them to live and work in the knowledge society. Quality as threshold is defining a threshold for quality means to set certain norms and criteria. Any institution that reaches these norms and criteria is deemed to be of quality. In the quality as value for money the notion of accountability is central to this definition of quality with accountability being based on the need for restraint in public expenditure. The concept of quality as enhancement or improvement emphasizes the pursuit of continuous improvement and is predicated on the notion that achieving quality is central to the academic ethos and that it is academics themselves who know best what quality is at any point in time.

To make it clear it is important to consider the reference of Tribus (1994) that indicate differences between education and businesses as follows: the school is not a factory, the student is not a "product", the education of the student is the product, successful completion of the product requires the student to participate as a worker, co managing the learning process.

The Green (1994) and Campell and Rozsnayi (2002) definition of quality for HEI is considered more related compare to previously defined quality for a product (Baskoro, 06). However, the dimension of the quality as indicated in Green (1994) may not relate to Indonesia HEI today. The gap is even greater if the quality is assessed by different user. It is because the quality should be defined by several related users e.g. community, companies, parents, etc. Therefore understanding the “User” is important to define the right dimension of quality for a university. For this reason, this paper defines the quality dimension related to the user expectation are as follows:

(1) Meeting Government Administration Regulation

P-HEI is an organization that has the right to be autonomous. However P-HEI must follow several (academic) rules and regulations from government to ensure and to guarantee the (academic) quality. Those who are not meeting such rules and regulations are considered not qualified. Therefore, quality is simply meeting the rules and regulations set forth by government especially from DGHE.

(2) Building/ Physical Appearance

Whether, it is right or wrong, community in general is simply assessed the quality of a university from its physical appearance. Therefore, it is not surprisingly that P-HEI in Indonesia investing their

financial mostly to improve and to set high standard physical appearance. Although logically there is no relation between the quality of process and graduate with physical appearance, it is simply important to prove and to convince the community about the quality of the university from this point of view.

(3) Meeting Government Accreditation Body

In today Indonesian university standard, accreditation is an important measure of quality. DGHE indicates that accreditation awarded by “*Badan Akreditasi Nasional Perguruan Tinggi*” (BAN PT), an accreditation body by government, is the only acceptable prove of quality. Therefore, P-HEI that has not awarded accreditation certificate or the certificate is already expire is assumed has lower quality. In fact, in reality, to be awarded the certificate by BAN-PT requires not only meeting the paper work but also commitment from P-HEI. Therefore, accreditation certificate by BAN-PT is now a day used as a guarantee of quality.

(4) ISO Certification

In addition to previous attributes, ISO certification is another additional prove of quality. It is because to get ISO Certification requires minimum requirement of being excellent in management of the university. Therefore, P-HEI that holds ISO Certification theoretically is proved to have excellent management. However, this ISO Certification is not a must for a university it is only additional added value that demonstrate the commitment of the university about quality.

(5) Value for Money

Value for money can be explained as follows. A P-HEI has the right to set the tuition fee and etc fee for student. Therefore, any university set up the tuition fee different one another. One university may set up the tuition fee according to the ability of the student to pay, another one may set up the tuition fee without considering student background. Therefore, it is not surprisingly that the tuition and other fee for student vary for each university. Assessment by the author showed that P-HEI that set high tuition and other fee may think that the university has high level of quality. Logically it could be but not necessarily so that a university with high tuition and other fee has better quality than other that set lower.

(6) University Excellence

Assessment by the author indicates that this is high level quality standard because only mature universities can develop excellence in the organization. Those that go to excellence usually have no (longer) problem with quality at lower attributes. Usually but not necessarily so, that the characteristic of the university e.g. (1) the university has no more problem with meeting rules and regulation by DGHE, and/or (2) the university has been awarded accreditation certificate from BAN-PT for so long.

(7) Research and Internationalization

This is a high standard/level prove of quality. Commonly, a university that has extensive research locally and/or internationally is considered a progressive university. The university is usually awarded research grants from many sources to support the research activities. However, in Indonesia especially for P-HEI the university at this level is considered very limited if not to say “not exist”.

(8) Worldwide (Academic) Cooperation

This is also a high standard/level of quality. Only a university that proactively communicates with other has the chance to develop worldwide cooperation. A university that able to do so usually has no barrier of quality. For the case of P-HEI, the “inferiority complex” usually inhibit to this direction. Therefore, Worldwide (Academic) Cooperation is a proven of high quality standard of a university. Based on experience of the author there is similarity of this concept with university abroad.

2.2 Stakeholder

University has many stakeholder, the following are part of them: government, employers, academic world, students, parents, society.

Every stakeholder has different view and meaning about quality therefore it is important to know what the stakeholder means about quality of HEI. For example, nowadays government measures quality of a university according to world university benchmark. Therefore, quality of a university is simply as long as the university listed in the world university ranking. At minimum, to be qualified a university must fulfill some requirements set by government, in this case DGHE. However, government role is also about ensuring student graduated from high school get the opportunity to enter university. Therefore it is important for government that as many students as possible can enroll and finish university within the scheduled time with reasonable costs.

Employers measure quality not directly at the university but at the graduates. In the eyes of employer quality refer to the knowledge, skills and attitudes obtained during the studies. Therefore, if graduates capability is beyond expectation, then the university is considered not qualified although it is not always true.

In academic world quality of a university is assessed at input, process, output, and outcome. The assessment is also done on the three main objectives of a university i.e. teaching, research, and community services. Therefore qualified university must have at least good academic program, good teaching method, good learning environment, good resources, and good relationship between teaching and research. This is actually accreditation items of a university. Consequently, a university that already awarded an accreditation by accreditation body (in country or overseas) is said qualified.

Quality for students and parents are different. For student, as long as they can achieve what they want to be as a student and graduates then it is ok. It is more on personal interest. For example a student wants to get hire with acceptable salary and job after graduation so long they got it the university is said qualified. The personal interest of the parents is also different then student. Generally, parents want to see result after graduation, if it is easy finding job then parents will assume the university is qualified. In the university itself, parents concern about cost and studies time. It is difficult for parents to face condition at a university with high cost but long studies time.

For a university it can then be concluded that quality is a very complex concept. It is no longer acceptable to speak "the quality" for university in fact it is "qualities". It is already demonstrated that requirements for quality is different for different stakeholders. Each stakeholder has different criteria of quality, as indicated earlier. Therefore, quality is not a one-dimensional, it is multi-dimensional and dynamic. So there is quality of input, process, and quality of output. All these dimensions have to be taken into account when discussing quality and judging quality.

Attempting to define precisely the meaning for multi-dimensional quality is a waste of time. It is impossible to define precisely the exact meaning of quality because an absolute meaning of quality does not exist. What can be taken into account is about trying seriously to assure the quality based on our idea about quality. As long as the (comprehensive) idea about quality that covers as many as expectation of stakeholders in a university exist, then the process of achieving and assuring it becomes more important to focus.

2.3 Performance Indicator

The term of performance indicator (PI) is also confusing because quality itself is already confusing. The aim of having performance indicator is to assist a university achieving quality that represented by a measurement of indicators. As indicated earlier that there is no exact definition of quality therefore there

is also no exact indicator for it. If there is exist an indicator to represent such measurement of quality seldom it measures directly the quality itself. For example, the measurement of research quality of a university is by using indicator of total number of publications. Does it really represent the quality of the research? Not always because we can argue that the number of publications may come from only several people in the university and that cannot represent the university as a whole. Besides that the number of publications not always represents the reality of the research itself, because a paper can be written from many sources of research with many methodologies. The result of a research can be published in a few or many papers. It depends on the writing productivity of the people. In the worst case, it is even a trick inside the publication itself. So that, instead of publishing one good quality of paper people tends to split into several papers for the sake of counting number of publications and for the sake of records. It is in danger because quality is now measured and represented by statistical data. Therefore, it is not always true that the number of publications represent the quality of research.

Another indicator that can also be argued is about measuring quality of a university by using indicator of the number of graduates. It is a simple logic of productivity; if the process is under control then productivity will increase. In the case of university, productivity may not be able to represent quality. The reason is that university is not simply making graduates like shop floor production, university educates people. Therefore, the quality can not be justified by productivity of the university. The quality depends mostly by the graduates abilities to overcome challenges.

The previous example demonstrates that attempts to measure quality using a statistical data is not always represent the quality itself; it is even misleading the goal of the quality. Trying to quantify quality in term of performance indicator tends to oversimplify the reality of quality. Quality in HEI is more than a collection of statistical data and figures. It is more on understanding idea of quality and finding way to develop judgment of quality. Therefore performance indicators should not be used as the end of judgment for a conclusion. It is better to be used as a way to indicate the area of concern for an improvement. Perhaps, it is only management information or indicator. But it is not the exact figure that represents the quality itself.

2.4 Quality Model

Unlike in HEI, it is not unusual for industries to use quality model such as MBNQA model (Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award), or the European Foundation Quality Model (EFQM). This quality model helps industries to manage the factors that enable them to success. This model helps to define strengths and weaknesses of an organization. However, if attempting to apply the same model to HEI adjustment must be made. It is because industry and university is different, for example unlike in Industry a university has multiple products and multiple clients. Therefore the quality model must be adapted to specific characteristic of HEI although the basic principle is still the same. The quality model for HEI is shown as in Figure 1.

The first column of this model shows the fundamental part of the model i.e. vision, mission, goals, and aims. The second column shows the university internal capability to achieve the formulated goals. It is important that a university first of all translates the formulated mission and goals into a policy document and strategy. This is part of strategic planning process of the university. In addition, university should also develop strategy related to management of the university (governance), human resources management, funding and financial management. The third column shows the core activity of a university i.e. education/learning/teaching; research and community services. Moreover, the last column relates to the achievements, the outcomes. Last column should be able to answer the following questions precisely: What has the HEI achieved? Are the achievements in line with formulated mission and goals?

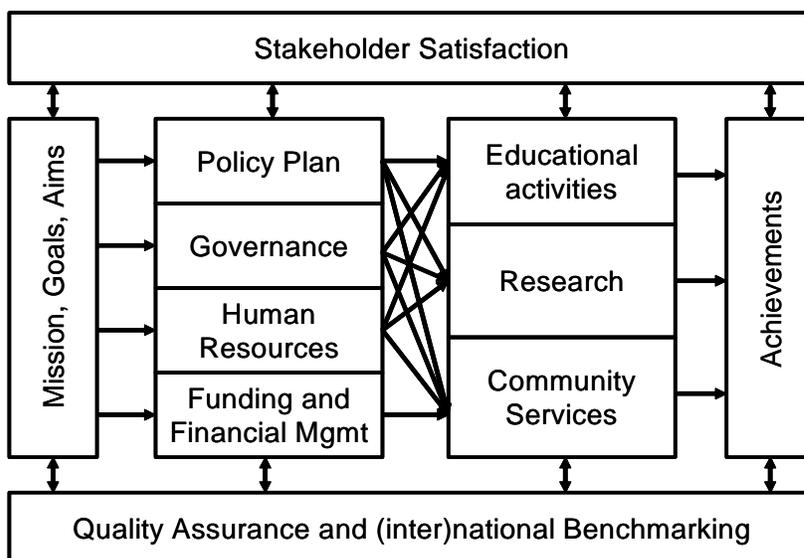


Figure 1. A Quality model for higher education institution (IUCEA, 2007)

Finally this model is coupled with two rows i.e. top row considers stakeholder satisfaction and bottom row considers assurance of the HEI quality using (inter) national benchmarking strategy each row connected two respective columns. This quality model can be used for self-assessment at institutional level. However, the core activities have to be assessed in more detail, based on the sub-models, e.g. teaching and learning (see Figure 2).

To capture understanding from Figure 2, first of all we should start with the question of the goals and the expected learning outcomes (1st columns). There are four rows in the middle of the model. According to the Handbook for Quality Assurance in Higher Education the model can be explained as follows: The first addresses the question of how the expected learning outcomes are translated into the program. What is the program specification? What is the program content? Is it fit for achieving the learning outcomes? How is the program organized? Does it help realize the expected learning outcomes? What is our didactic concept or teaching/learning strategy? Finally in the last cell: How do we assess what students learnt and what they were expected to learn? The second row considers the "input" into the process: the staff, support staff, the students, the facilities and student advice/support. The third row has to do with the way the quality is assured, the role of students in the evaluation of the provisions. It also looks at how the curriculum is designed. How has the university organized its staff development activities and how has it organized the feedback from the stakeholders? The fourth row regards the outcomes of the learning process: the profile of the graduate, the pass rates and dropout rates, the average time to degree and the employability of the graduates.

The other role of HEI is to do research, although this is not always the case for all higher education institutions. Each HEI should perform research based on their internal capability; the quality of research is an important aspect of its overall quality. Figure 3 shows the quality model for "Research" at left hand figure and quality model for "Community Service" at right hand figure.

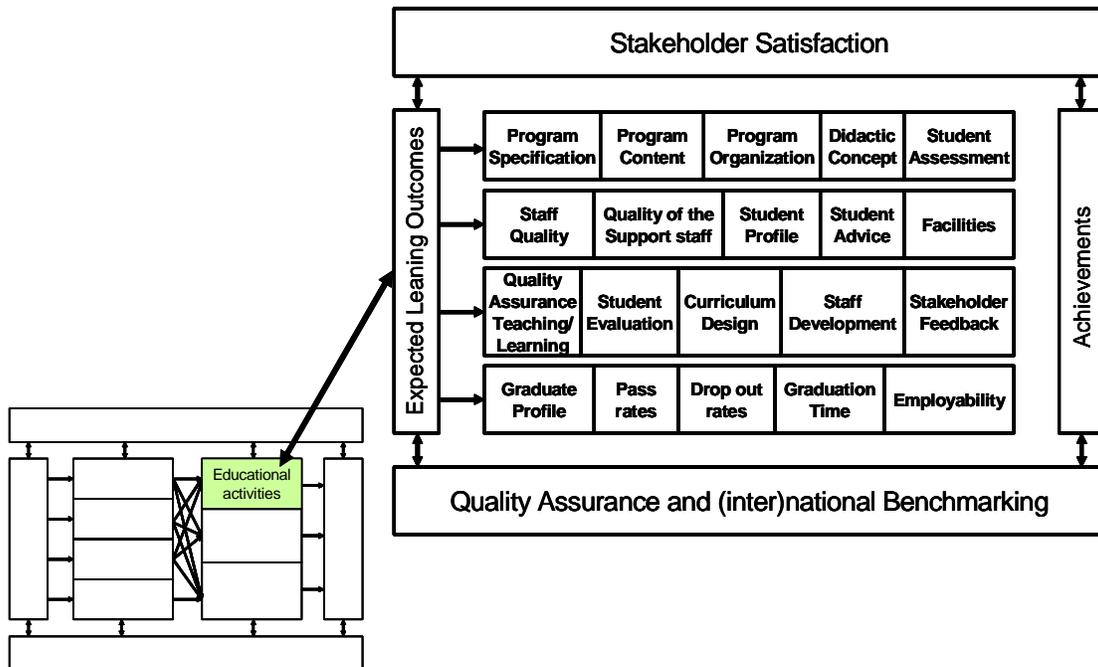


Figure 2. Quality model for teaching and learning (IUCEA, 2007)

2.5 Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is actually not a new buzz word; it is already familiar quite long time. The quality assurance becomes familiar nowadays because the intensity of external pressure about quality is now reasonably high. Some of the external pressures are as follows: graduates should meet requirements of stakeholder; labor market requires graduates to have sufficient knowledge (hard and soft), globalization and internationalization, and high quality demand of the society.

Although quality assurance is familiar in the early days in fact it is not unstructured as nowadays. So what is quality assurance anyway? Quality assurance (or quality management) may be described as the systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of maintaining and improving quality. The quality assurance system in higher education is divided into internal quality assurance, and external quality assessment and accreditation. In the internal quality assurance (IQA), the quality is primarily the responsibility of the higher education institution itself. It is the university (and especially its staff and students) that is responsible for providing and assuring quality. Therefore, it is important that each university develops an efficient IQA system. There is no one model that fits all. It is up to the university to decide what model fits it best. However, there are some basic conditions that have to be met. IQA system equipped with the basic elements for monitoring, evaluation and improvement. At least the IQA system should cover the Deming cycle: plan, do, check and act (PDCA). Mean while, in the external quality assurance and accreditation, a quality assurance system not only has an internal aspect. External elements also exist. A university must also be accountable to the outside world. Accreditation is an important accountability instrument with which we can verify our quality. Accreditation is a formal decision, based on evaluation of past performance, indicating that certain standards, certain minimum requirements are met (Vroeijenstijn, 2003). Sometimes, accreditation is seen as a bureaucratic process, but accreditation may have also positive effects, because it provides us with a quality label that we can use in competition; offers opportunities for benchmarking and delivers feedback on the self-assessment.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As indicated earlier that quality is a term that has ambiguous meaning. Therefore to speak about quality is not speaking at one dimension it is dynamic multi dimension term. The handbook of quality assurance in higher education stresses several remarks related to quality:

Quality is not always the same as efficiency!

The discussion on quality assessment is often connected with the concept of "efficiency". In assessing quality, an important question will be: "Do we achieve the required level of quality at acceptable cost?" An efficiency-oriented approach as such is a good starting point, but the problem is that efficiency is not always defined as "at acceptable cost", but often as "at minimal cost", and this may threaten quality. It may be very efficient to have lectures for a thousand students, but it is not effective. It may be considered efficient to have a very structured degree program with student assessments every four weeks, forcing students to work and to keep up with the program. However, does this method lead to the creation of the "right", independent, and critically thinking graduate? It may be considered efficient to use multiple-choice questions for student assessment, but does it enhance verbal and written communication skills?

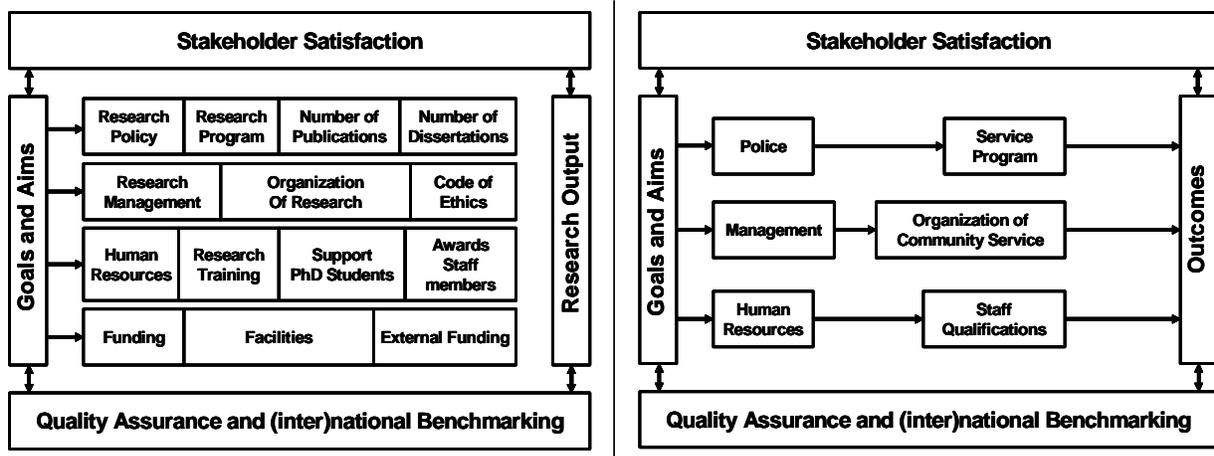


Figure 3. Quality model for research (left) and community service (right) (IUCEA, 2007)

The reasonable meaning of quality is about delivering our promise. Therefore, the measure of quality is based on our promise. One should remember that we should not lower our grade of promise in order to make it easier to achieve it. If do so, the quality is yet negotiable. The aim of quality is actually achieving excellence that sometimes cannot be measured statistically. There is at least a bottom line for the threshold quality, although it is not clear what that bottom line is. This is something that the university has to decide.

Therefore, this paper tries to capture the idea of quality and introduce a structured method to achieve it. The basic idea is by applying modified tools used in industry to fit with higher education institution. To note that when such a quality concept, a TQM concept for example, is applied the critical and logical thinking should be aware because managing HEI cannot be simply replaced by a quality management approach. In most cases, ensuring quality in HEI management is a unique approach because it is dynamic.

4. CONCLUSION

The previous research question can be answered as follows: “is industrial quality approach can be implemented directly to HEI?” The answer is “NO”. Although some of quality dimension in industry can give insight to quality of HEI but not all of them are directly related to HEI. The main reason is that quality in HEI is multi dimension and the requirement is also changed following external pressures. Therefore, what is important to quality in HEI is the process of improvement itself. It indicates that not the quality dimensions are useful aspects to HEI but the quality assurance and total quality management are. Actually, HEI requires continuous improvement to increase the level of excellence. It is because the level of excellence is a way to judge and to push quality of a HEI and it makes sense. The weakness from this way of thinking is that excellence depends on how high we set the “standard”. Therefore the higher a HEI set the standard, the better in quality will be.

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