

# Review of: "Quality assessment program of the teaching activity of the higher education faculty staff. A case study"

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The article deals with the description of the DOCENTIA program, from ANECA, the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation as well as its implementation in the case of the Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV). The DOCENTIA program aims to support universities in the design of their own mechanisms to manage the quality of the teaching activity.

The article fulfills its objective and provides an overview of the DOCENTIA program, including a detailed description of its mission and objectives, as well as the axes on which its model for the evaluation of teaching is based. The official vision of the UPV's experience in evaluating the quality of teaching is also described in considerable detail, listing its explicit objectives and describing some details of the evaluation process.

This aspect of the work only deserves one objection, in my opinion, concerning the structure of the contents: the proposed structure of the article includes two sections, one of which is dedicated to describing the DOCENTIA program, while the other deals with its implementation at the UPV. However, the section on the ANECA program includes information on the evaluation of teaching quality specifically at the UPV. For the rest, the exposition is sufficiently clear and complete and provides the reader who is unfamiliar with the Spanish university system with interesting data on the way in which official bodies conceive teaching quality and its management.

However, the article has some flaws and I think that it could be improved in the following aspects:

The article is presented as a case study, but lacks the advantages that case studies offer in analyzing social phenomena. A case study benefits from considering in detail the context in which phenomena (in this case quality assessment) take place. However, the article devotes little, if any, space to describing the characteristics of the UPV. The non-Spanish reader would benefit from information regarding the size, origin, structure, history, or curricula offered by UPV.

Case studies are also useful in that they are able to offer a description of reality from the point of view of different agents and stakeholders. The article, on the other hand, refers exclusively to the official vision and ignores the existence of conflicts or discordant visions. Universities are a terrain, if not more, at least as propitious as any other for conflicts and power struggles (Baldridge, 1968). Specifically, the very definition of teaching quality is controversial (Harvey and Green, 1993) and quality management constitutes a battlefield in which different options for university governance fight each against others (Olaskoaga-Larrauri et al., 2015). The article essentially ignores these issues and describes the introduction of a new quality management model as if it could be politically aseptic or merely a technical solution.

In this respect, I regret that the authors did not take a more critical approach in their analysis. I am not suggesting that they should have chosen a position contrary to the official model for managing teaching quality. I am only saying that they should have adopted two precautions:

a) I think they should have reviewed the literature on university management models. These models, which are usually normative and controversial, provide a vantage point from which they could have more deeply interpreted the meaning and consequences of each proposal about management teaching quality, including the official one. Locus of authority, distribution of responsibilities about the conception and execution of teaching tasks, and coordination mechanisms for teaching work are highly significant features of each model of quality management that could have been more deeply analyzed on the basis of this literature. Moreover, there is a wide range of classic works on the subject of management models for higher education (Bess, 1988; Bush, 2011; Clark, 1983; Hoy and Miskel, 1996; to name just a few) which I am sure could enrich the article.

b) I think that authors should have considered unofficial positions and, in particular, the opinions of academics regarding the reforms to which they are being subjected. In academic institutions, the effectiveness of reforms, such as the ones described in the article, depends on how are they accepted by academics, and the evidence shows that academics have several ways of influencing their effectiveness, from outright opposition to cynical simulation (Newton, 2002).

Finally, the literature is also rich in debates on the usefulness of expedients whose effectiveness is assumed in the article. The best example of this is the Students Evaluation of Teaching, a set of methods over which, despite their generalization, the shadow of doubt has always hung (Pounder, 2007).

I hope that my comments will be useful for the authors.

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