Thinking out of the box as a precondition for sustainability and innovation development

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Inspiration for the topic

- Status of the country

- University status

- European and global trends in education and response to them

Objectives

- To present an institutional QA model
- To examine if and how it contributes towards institutional improvement
- To check if and how that improvement affects the society
- To get feedback on the maturity of the system
- To reflect on areas for modification and improvement

QA context

International

- Requirements to demonstrate active performance by educational institutions in the last few decades
- Quality concept borrowed from business and industry (Ponder, 1999)
- Challenges resulting from measurement of intangibles in education (Lindsay, 1999)

National

- SEEU established in 2001, close to the signing of Bologna Declaration
- Based its QA system according to ESG
- Lack of real and systematic national approach towards QA
- The new Law (2018) provisions for Quality Agency with two Boards: Accreditation and Evaluation (the later one still not functioning)

Testing the system

- Necessity to further develop and strengthen the QA independently from national bodies
- Demographic changes, decreasing of student population
- Disloyal competition
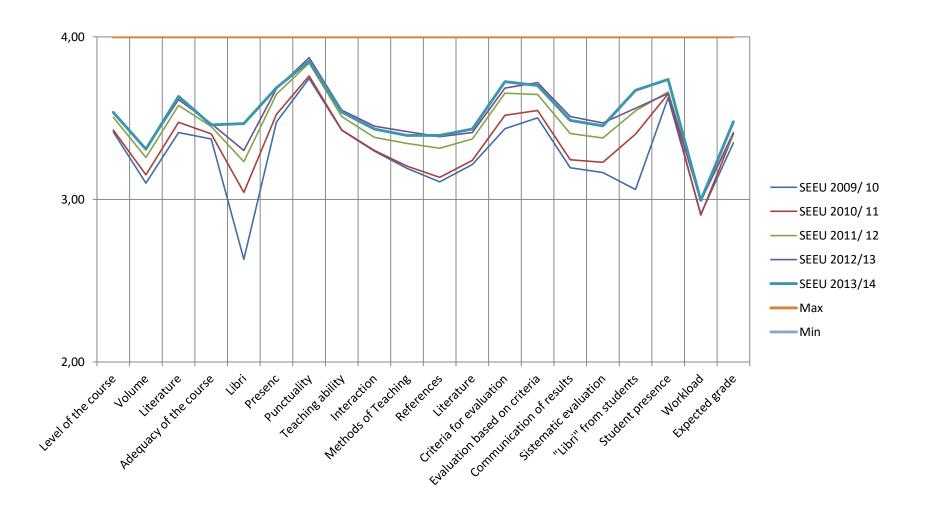- Quality as the only condition to ensure financial sustainability

Methodology

- **Assumption**: increased quality of teaching and learning, including preparation for the job market and practical application of the knowledge acquired, will lead to increased motivation for innovative thinking and entrepreneurship activities and increased student employability

- **Approach**: analysis of data from quality initiatives in order to see if and what improvements they have brought and how they are contributing towards increasing the University societal impact
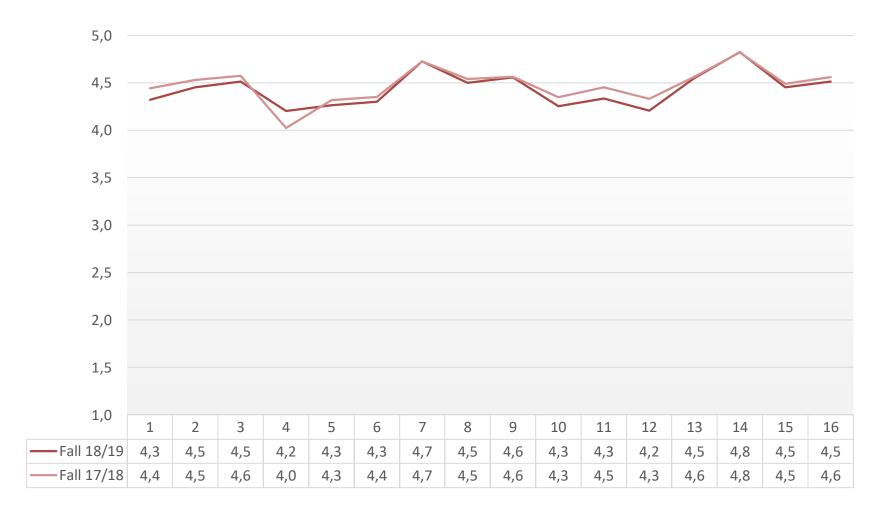
Instruments used

1. **Student evaluation trends** to measure the quality of teaching and learning

2. **Number of start up companies** to measure motivation for innovation and entrepreneurship activities

3. **Student employment rate –** to measure how well SEEU students rate on the job market
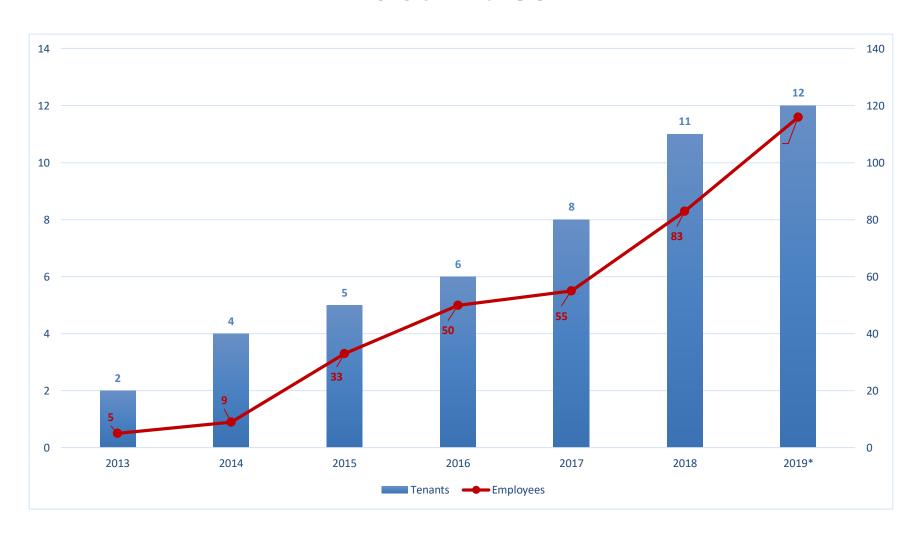
Student evaluation trends

Student evaluation after modification (online evaluation)

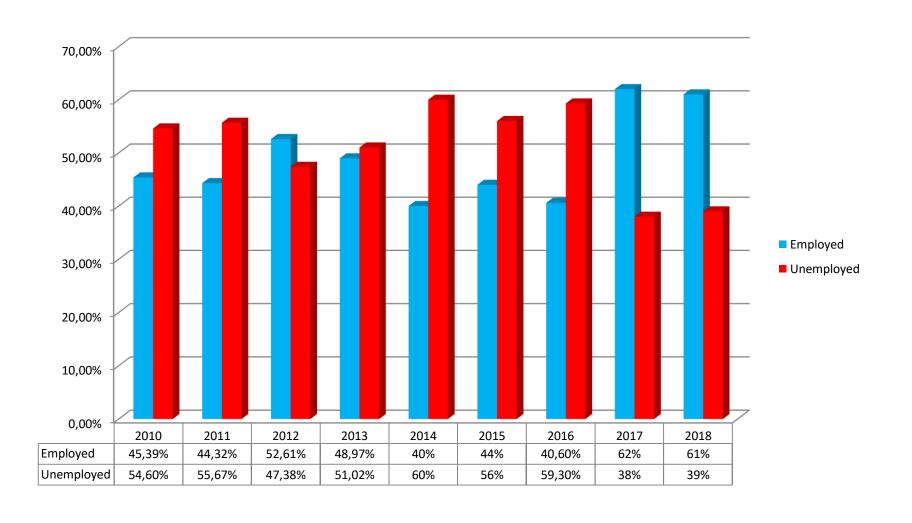|	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Fall 18/19	4,3	4,5	4,5	4,2	4,3	4,3	4,7	4,5	4,6	4,3	4,3	4,2	4,5	4,8	4,5	4,5
Fall 17/18	4,4	4,5	4,6	4,0	4,3	4,4	4,7	4,5	4,6	4,3	4,5	4,3	4,6	4,8	4,5	4,6

Questions

1. The work required of me was appropriate based on course objectives.
2. The assessment (tests, projects etc.) appropriately reflected the syllabus.
3. The course encouraged me to think critically.
4. The course enabled me to practically apply the acquired knowledge.
5. I learned a great deal in this course.
6. The course materials helped me understand the subject matter. SA   A   N   D   SD

7. The instructor provided clear expectations for the course. SA   A   N   D   SD
8. The instructor communicated effectively (through email, Google Classroom, etc).
9. The instructor stimulated my interest in the subject matter.
10. The instructor provided useful feedback on my work.
11. The instructor used variety of teaching methods (group work, pair work, discussions, debates, etc).
12. The instructor demonstrated mastery of the subject matter.
13. The instructor's class attendance was regular
14. Overall course content rating   5   4   3   2   1
15. Overall instructor rating
16. Student GPA (if applicable) 6-7   7-8   8-9   9-10   NA

Student innovation and entrepreneurship activities

SEEU alumni employment rate

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Employed	45,39%	44,32%	52,61%	48,97%	40%	44%	40,60%	62%	61%
Unemployed	54,60%	55,67%	47,38%	51,02%	60%	56%	59,30%	38%	39%

■ Employed
■ Unemployed

Conclusions

- QA system at SEEU works well for the time being
- Obstacles do exist from both internal and external factors: good will needed to further develop University quality culture and change people's mindset for openness, self criticism and self reflection while being surrounded by disloyal competition
- Improved teaching and learning with all the components included lead to better student preparation for work and career development
- QA system contributing towards creating a socially responsible higher education institution

Challenges

- The processes become mechanical throughout the years and thus perceived as administrative and not motivating
- Novelty and changes should be introduced and the instruments constantly tested and improved
- Attention needed in order not to turn quality enhancement into quality control (University utilizes additional instruments: observation of teaching and learning, measurement of individual research activities, measurement of online activities and 'presence' in the online platforms used to facilitate teaching and learning).
- Motivation and award for the best performers as ultimate goals but this kind of performance management might be seen as an excessive control

Dilemmas

Where do we go from this point? What else can we do? How can we further strengthen the role of QA without making the process bureaucratic? What can we do to maintain the already established institutional quality culture in balance with the national legislation and state of art of QA?