

# **From *Pedagogy* to *Quality Assurance* in Education**

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# **From *Pedagogy* to *Quality Assurance* in Education: An International Perspective**

EDITED BY

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# Contents

Author Biographies	vii
Acknowledgements	xiii

## Part I: Introduction

<b>Chapter 1 From <i>Pedagogy</i> to <i>Quality Assurance</i> in Education: An International Perspective</b> <i>Heidi Flavian</i>	3
--	---

## Part II: Education and Schools

<b>Chapter 2.1 Critical Thinking <i>Pedagogy</i> and <i>Quality Assurance</i> in the United States</b> <i>Valerie Lovegreen</i>	13
<b>Chapter 2.2 Proposal to Promote Quality of Education: A View from Spain</b> <i>Ernesto López-Gómez, Raúl González Fernández, Antonio Medina and Samuel Gento</i>	29
<b>Chapter 2.3 The Management and Assurance of Quality in Romanian Schools</b> <i>Loredana-Adriana Tudorache, Ruxandra Folostina and Teodora Michel</i>	45
<b>Chapter 2.4 Pedagogical Approaches and Initiatives for Educational <i>Quality Assurance</i> in Turkey</b> <i>Nükhet Çıkrıkçı, H. Eren Suna and Yurdagül Günel</i>	63
<b>Chapter 2.5 Congruence Between Pedagogical and Assessment Approaches: A Case of One Large Province in South Africa</b> <i>Bongani D. Bantwini</i>	87

### Part III: Special Education

<b>Chapter 3.1 Inclusion of Children with Special Needs as an Opportunity to Increase the Quality of Teaching in Israel</b> <i>Bilha Paryente and Heidi Flavian</i>	103
--	-----

<b>Chapter 3.2 Inclusion, Diversity and Quality in the Mexican Educational Context: Perceptions of Teachers in the State of Sonora (Mexico)</b> <i>Manuela Guillén Lúgigo, Blanca Valenzuela and Reyna Campa Álvarez</i>	117
---	-----

### Part IV: Higher Education and Adult Education

<b>Chapter 4.1 Pedagogy and Quality Assurance in Thai Higher Education Institutions</b> <i>Buratin Khampirat, Narupollawat Hastindra Na Ayudhaya and Phanommas Bamrungsin</i>	129
--	-----

<b>Chapter 4.2 Quality Assurance in Adult Education in Latvia</b> <i>Ineta Luka, Andra Fernate, Rita Birzina and Tamara Pigozne</i>	155
--	-----

<i>Index</i>	175
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Part I

## **Introduction**

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## Chapter 1

# From *Pedagogy* to *Quality Assurance* in Education: An International Perspective

*Heidi Flavian*

*Keywords:* Pedagogy; education; special education; higher education; quality assurance; learning

The idea of writing a book that integrates different perspectives about *pedagogy* and *quality assurance* in education was developed during researchers' meetings at international ECER (European Conference on Educational Research, which is part of the European Educational Research Association (EERA)) conferences over a number of years. These annual meetings, at which all researchers presented the *quality assurance* of education in their countries, led to the understanding that this knowledge should be shared with other researchers around the world. The necessity of these international perspectives is strengthened nowadays, when people are relocating from one country to another, and immigrant children need to integrate in schools all over the world. Thus, an understanding of different approaches towards *quality assurance* based on different pedagogical approaches has become highly significant.

As the editor of the book and co-author of one of the chapters, I believe it is unique in its integration of several approaches for *quality assurance* in educational systems, based on the different leading *pedagogy* approaches in different countries.

\* \* \* \* \*

Educational development is a dynamic process influenced by a variety of factors such as culture, language and, mostly, society's goals. Throughout the years, educators, pedagogues, psychologists and others have developed different approaches and models in an attempt to achieve efficient and effective learning processes in their countries. At the same time, researchers develop different ways to monitor those learning processes in order to consider their quality, practical and effectiveness over the long term. Looking at the leading visions different countries have while developing their local educational processes leads to the understanding that beyond the differences, all countries share the same core goal: teaching children via a path that will

allow them in the future to be an active and contributing part of the society they live in. However, what this actual path is may differ somewhat from country to country. Another common goal educators share is their wish to base educational processes on solid *pedagogy* theories that will afford them the highest quality of education system to promote attainment of their stated goals. Nevertheless, the cultural differences that may be evident throughout these processes are also reflected through the variety of quality assurance tools that are developed according to the sub-goals each country defines. Therefore, one cannot simply replicate educational or *quality assurance* processes from one culture to another without understanding the core cultural perspectives and pedagogical approach that underpin them, and then making the necessary adaptations to the other culture. Although learning from different educational processes in different countries may seem complicated because of the dynamic social changes taking place around the world, it is essential to better recognise the differences in order to develop practical and quality educational processes that promote the understanding of different learning developments.

This book provides an overview of the variety ways researchers implement pedagogical approaches through the educational system they work in. The authors of this book hail from nine different countries and four different continents to present a unique international perspective. In each chapter, the authors present the leading updated pedagogical approach in their country, focussing on their core educational challenges, along with the *quality assurance* process used, in order to manage the defined educational challenge.

Generally, while conducting comparisons there is a tendency to emphasise differences and conceal the common criteria which may be efficiently used to promote programmes and processes. In this book, however, because the commonalities will be so useful, the uniqueness of the educational and *quality assurance* processes of each country are presented from the common perspective all authors share; that educators should learn one from another in order to further the improvement of education systems around the world. This core perspective is presented in each chapter along with three other common criteria: (1) the challenges educators face while striving to improve educational programmes and to assure the quality of their innovations, (2) the challenges educators deal with while investigating the quality of education in an era of global dynamic changes in all areas and (3) the need to keep up with the standards of *quality assurance* defined by policymakers.

Nevertheless, in our dynamic world, while developing new educational programmes accompanied by a variety of *quality assurance* processes, recognising and defining the differences is no less crucial. Throughout this book, authors refer to differences that develop from different cultural perspectives or social processes. Recognising these differences will allow appropriate and efficient *quality assurance* processes in education.

*Quality assurance* and *pedagogy* are the main concepts all our authors use. The practical perspectives presented in terms of these two concepts may differ, and yet, the authors developed their perceptions from the core definitions of these concepts.

*Quality assurance* in general is a process that seeks to guarantee that core goals, which were carefully defined before implementing a certain programme, are achieved in the most efficient ways. *Quality assurance* is designed to examine

every factor that might contribute to the success or failure of a certain process. It should always conclude with recommendations for improvement. Due to the complexity of the process, different researchers relate to *quality assurance* from different perspectives. The basis for the development of these different approaches relies on the on-going debates in regard to how and why *quality assurance* should be conducted. Nevertheless, the variety of perspectives regarding quality assurance may be organised and recognised as a process that focusses specifically on protecting, demonstrating or enhancing quality in variety of domains.

Whereas there are different approaches to how *quality assurance* should be conducted, it is crucial to remember that every such process should be tailored to the specific programme being assessed, according to its specific goals. Yet, the core principles of *quality assurance* should be clear and maintained throughout in order to allow other people to learn from its results.

*Pedagogy* is the domain of teaching in general and theories and practices of learning. *Pedagogy*, as an academic discipline, aims to offer the knowledge of how to teach alongside consideration of the necessary teaching and learning skills for different learners and different contents. While implementing *pedagogy* theories, teachers also have to consider the culture in which the learning is taking place along with the social, political and psychological perspectives of all participants. Educators who use the concept of *pedagogy* to describe the act of teaching usually refer to the actions, judgments and teaching strategies that teachers use.

Educators who practiced teaching for many years with different population of learners began to integrate a variety of *pedagogy* theories while planning and conducting their teaching. Therefore, while following a variety of curricula, principles from different theories of *pedagogy* may look familiar, and it can be hard to recognise one specific theory within them.

Although theories of *pedagogy* have been developing for centuries, the understanding that teaching can be improved by integrating *quality assurance* began only a few decades ago. Moreover, it is essential to keep in mind that on a daily basis, the people responsible for turning those theories and visions into practice are the teachers. They are the professionals who integrate and modify the variety of *pedagogy* approaches with the results of the *quality assurance* processes, along with the dynamic changes in their society, in order to develop better curricula and learning processes for their learners. Hence, the knowledge created and accumulated from educational *quality assurance* processes should be shared by educators all over the world.

As mentioned earlier, through this book variety of educators from different countries share the *pedagogy* and *quality assurance* processes commonly conducted in their countries. In addition to the shared use of those two main concepts, the chapters have been organised into three main sections according to common topics the authors chose to focus on: (1) education and schools; (2) special education and (3) higher education and adult education.

## **Education and Schools**

Although from a broad spectrum education begins with birth, when referring to formal education the focus is different. Around the world, the concept of

official education is used in reference to the educational processes conducted from preschool through to academia. Thus, the first section of the book contains five chapters written about practicing education and *pedagogy* in schools. These authors present the current main perspectives and practices in the USA, Spain, Romania, Turkey and South Africa.

Critical thinking is one of the most challenging terms that include some of the main thinking components such as the ability to analyse, reflect, judge and strategise systematically, and solve problems. In her chapter, *Critical Thinking Pedagogy and Quality Assurance in the United States*, Lovegreen refers to the various definitions of the concepts along with how educators focus on how to develop them in order to promote academic achievement due to its importance in developing life-long learners. The variety of definitions, taxonomies, models and theories of critical thinking developed over the years makes a significant contribution to the pedagogical approaches to the teaching of critical thinking in the United States. Beyond the challenge of defining critical thinking, teaching it is even more challenging. Moreover, pedagogues in the USA defined the core 4Cs for learning in the twenty-first century: collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking. Hence, teaching of critical thinking nowadays is integrated through pedagogical approaches, including project-based learning, project-based design, e-learning and active learning and descriptions of instructional *pedagogy* including the general, infusion, immersion and mixed approaches. In this chapter, Lovegreen stresses that *quality assurance* is an essential component in ensuring that pedagogical approaches to critical thinking are effective, and discusses the contribution of core standards in the teaching of critical thinking in the United States.

While worldwide interest in educational quality has increased, many international organisations and national education systems have conducted studies on the practical meaning of quality, the various ways it can be measured and the factors that promote it as a basis for designing education reforms and rendering good practices visible. In this chapter, the authors from Spain; López-Gómez, González Fernández, Medina and Gento, explore conceptual perspectives on educational quality that are informed by various pedagogical approaches and examine the initiatives implemented in Spain to improve educational quality in non-university contexts, while analysing education legislation over the past 30 years. In their chapter, *Proposals to Promote Quality of Education: A View from Spain*, the authors also propose the elements they believe might further promote educational quality in non-university settings in Spain and elsewhere. These proposals revolve around the educational project, teacher training and professional development, diversity and inclusion in education and community leadership.

Following the development of *quality assurance* processes and their implications in Romania led the authors; Tudorache, Folostina and Michel, to write about it in their chapter, *The Management and Assurance of Quality in Romanian Schools*. The authors allow us to better understand the unique influences of both social and political changes on education in the country. Apparently, *quality assurance* was originally developed from ISO definitions, but it strengthened in 2006 after the Education *Quality Assurance* Law was adopted (L87/2006). This law defined the main quality of education concepts, stating a methodology related to

the internal and external assurance of quality, establishing the responsibilities for *quality assurance* through national agencies. In addition, the law refers also to the responsibility for *quality assurance* at pre-university and university institutions. The leading principle for the *quality assurance* and the abovementioned law is that school is not only a place where we teach children to write, read and other knowledge, but also where they develop their autonomy and form their personality. Moreover, schools should have the necessary resources to remove economic, social, cultural inequity in order to offer equal chances in learning and development. Although the authors of this chapter propose a model of intervention to promote improving value for the *quality assurance* of education in Romania, this model may also be generalised and implemented in other countries as well.

The fourth chapter in this section was written by Çıkrıkçı, Suna and Günel who wrote about *Pedagogical Approaches and Initiatives for Educational Quality Assurance in Turkey*. In their chapter, they explain the mutual development of Turkish educational and institutional *quality assurance*, as well as the meaning of school effectiveness from the Turkish perspective. Understanding that education is widely accepted as a life-long process, school is the institution that was established to provide good quality academic education which involves complex and more abstract knowledge and ideas as well as literacy and simple numerical skills to be imparted to the students. In Turkey, education is one of the state's basic functions that must be implemented and performed according to the constitution, under the supervision and control of the state. Accordingly, all types of educational programmes, including those conducted within higher education institutions, are supervised by the government *quality assurance* council. Nevertheless, educational programmes and teacher-training programmes may develop their education curricula independently as long as they follow the defined *quality assurance* criteria and vision.

Bantwini, from South Africa, who wrote the fifth chapter in this section, share with the readers the important discussion whether or not there is congruence between the assessment and pedagogical approaches used when teaching natural science and technology education in South Africa. This discussion is presented in his chapter, *Congruence between Pedagogical and Assessment Approaches: A Case of One Large Province in South Africa*, after conducting an intensive research project with fourth-grade teachers of natural science and technology. The study reveals the lack of congruence between pedagogical and assessment approaches used in teaching, and a clear lack of holistic thinking about both teaching and learning processes. Thus, the main argument is that there is a need for congruence between pedagogical approaches and assessment methods in order to benefit teaching-learning processes.

## **Special Education**

The phrase 'education for all' is accepted by most educators and educational policymakers, and is implemented in the majority of countries around the world in different formats. Nevertheless, due to the social changes cultures undergo, practicing this perception of education changes dynamically as time passes even within the

same country. The differences between how 'education for all' is practice may be presented along the continuum from exclusion to inclusion: from providing education for learners with special needs in isolated programmes up to full inclusion programmes in which all learners learn together, regardless of their emotional, psychological, cognitive or any other differences. Authors from two countries, Israel and Mexico, wrote about the unique inclusion *pedagogy* approaches in their countries and how *quality assurance* is developed in order to promote proper and updated educational processes among learners with special needs.

Paryente and Flavian, from Israel present how the education system has adopted the inclusion process in order to increase both the quality and the effectiveness of education in their country. The core idea that is the basis for inclusion in Israel, as in many other countries, is that inclusion of children with special needs into mainstream schools reflects society's view of their role as caregivers for all citizens, regardless of any understanding of the benefits that educating for inclusion might have. Nevertheless, the unique perspective Paryente and Flavian present in their chapter entitled *Inclusion of Children with Special Needs as an Opportunity to Increase the Quality of Teaching in Israel* is the advantages educational leaders have identified in the process of inclusion. These advantages can be used to promote quality teacher-training programmes and as a result, higher-quality education for all. On the basis of the new inclusion law in Israel, the authors offer better understanding of possible implications of the new inclusion policy in Israeli elementary schools which will allow the development of innovative and quality teacher-training programmes, and the quality of teaching in general.

The authors from Mexico, Guillén Lúgigo, Valenzuela and Campa Álvarez, present some evidence of an empirical exploration carried out with 178 primary school teachers from the State of Sonora, Mexico, about their perceptions regarding diversity and inclusion. The study they conducted on the basis of mixed methodology is described in their chapter, *Inclusion, Diversity and Quality in the Mexican Educational Context: Perceptions of Teachers in the State of Sonora (Mexico)*. The results allow appreciating in general a tendency to incorporate diversity in the appreciation and valuation schemes. However, there are also appreciations that make an important set of deficiencies to face diversity in schools evident

## Higher Education and Adult Education

The third section of this book presents perspectives of *quality assurance* of academic institutions for schools graduates. Although the authors of these two chapters are from two different continents, they share core ideas of how *quality assurance* should be conducted in higher education programmes.

Nowadays in Thailand, higher education institutions are affiliated with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation and other relevant ministries which connect the state-of-the-art technology/facilities to all academic programmes. Writing about *Pedagogy and Quality Assurance in Thai Higher Education Institutions* (HEI), the authors Khampirat, Chottum and Bamrungsin present some general information about Thailand's higher education system, in order to explain the success in the growth in the number of students