

Asta Savanevičienė, Živilė Stankevičiūtė

## Quality Assurance in Educational Organizations through Synergy of Internal and External Evaluation

**Purpose** – To study the assumptions of the synergy effect due to the dual quality evaluation in the educational organizations.

**Design/methodology/approach** – There is growing interest in exploring the power of learning as a means of personal and organizational development (Coleman & Ingram, 2004), hereby in such a competitive context as further education quality issues are relevant not only for providers of services but also for learners, despite the fact that quality means different things to different people (Harney & Green, 1992; Gallifa & Batalle, 2010). The coexistence of many understandings of quality is a justification of a plenty of quality management models, however the new approach underlying the possibility to achieve the synergy effect due to internal and external quality evaluation is in demand. The internal evaluation can contribute to quality improvement as the organization will recognise certain things about itself and surroundings. Meanwhile the external evaluation enables to detect things that are not obvious to the educational organization. Due to the fact that the organization and external auditor come into contact with one another, they can stimulate, enrich and introduce new elements for quality improvement – it means to achieve the synergy effect. In that context Learner-Oriented Quality development and certification (LQW) model is the quality development process which combines internal and external quality evaluation and introduces a continuous cycle of quality development. The quality development process begins with an internal evaluation: the written form of the internal evaluation is the self-evaluation report, in which the organization describes the existing quality processes, an evaluation of those processes and proves compliance with the requirements of eleven obligatory quality areas. While the LQW model is focused on the successful learning of the learners, it is essential to define successful learning right at the start of the quality process and all quality measures in all eleven quality areas have to be justified based on the definition of successful learning. The external evaluation includes the audit report, which is an attempt by auditors to interpret and understand the self-evaluation report in a hermeneutic way and the audit visit, which is a mean for a discussion of the audit report findings with the relevant staff members of organizations (Zech, 2007).

**Findings** – The qualitative research findings indicate the approaches of two educational organizations in Lithuania to the synergy effect concerning the quality development using internal and external evaluation. Some thoughts and ideas of the representative of the educational organization regarding the synergy effect by seeking the successful learning are presented.

**Originality/value** – The paper provides not standard approach to quality assurance which relies on the internal and external quality evaluation. The empirical research shows the understanding of the significance to use both: the internal and external evaluation of quality and to achieve the synergy effect.

The paper is based on the material of the Leonardo da Vinci innovation transferring project “Crossnational quality management in continuing learning for people with low educational attainment in the European context” (“Länderübergreifendes Qualitätsmanagement in der Weiterbildung für Personen mit niedrigem Bildungsstand im Europäischen Kontext”) (No 2009-1-PL-LEO05-05039).

**Keywords:** education quality, quality assurance, quality evaluation.