Engineering culture of quality as a strategic approach

to ensuring the quality of higher education

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Abstract

Culture is one of the most important elements helping to establish quality in various institutions, and since quality has become the main aim of institutions, they have sought to establish the so-called quality culture. The university, as an institution for the formation of elites, seeks to embody the principles of quality as a primary goal and localize quality culture as an integrated system.

In this study, we seek to focus on the importance of engineering the culture of educational institution, by asking the following question: how can a culture of quality be established as an approach to achieve the higher education quality?

1. *Introduction*

The higher education sector is an important sector in our society, it contributes to lay the foundations for development and progress, and helps to solve many problems that various societies suffer from. It also considered an important means in achieving scientific, technological and economic development. The higher education sector in Algeria has gone through several reforms since independence until today, and in keeping with the developments of the current era, it is working on devising methods that help achieve quality which has become necessary in achieving the established goals. Among the strategies that should be adopted is the initialization of the fundamental base which is culture due to the extension of its influence in all operations, so it is necessary tore-engineering the quality culture in line with the requirements of the higher education sector.

This what made us shed light in our study on this field, relying on the descriptive approach for the purpose of knowing and describing how the culture of quality affects the process of achieving quality in higher education, and the basic values which culture of quality is based, in addition to the steps involving in adopting it and the means used to do so.

2. *Conceptual Introduction*

Defining the concepts is one of the most important steps in which the topic is based, in order to clarify its general orientation, and determine the relationship of its variable to each other and their place in it. The topic focused on the following concepts:

2.1 *Culture*

The word "culture" is used in the English language to denote a figurative meaning of culture, its original sensory meaning is agriculture or education (material), and the equivalent of the word in the Arabic language is taken from 'educating the spear ' i.e. Leveling it.(Eliot,2001, p27)

The beginning of the use of the term 'culture' dates back to anthropologists, it referred to the spiritual and mental dimension of a person in the 18th. A new transformation was known with Edward Burnett Taylor who considered himself a spokesman for anthropologists. He defined culture in his book " Primitive Culture" in 1871 as: "every belief, including knowledge, belief, art, moral objects, law, traditions and all other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Ferryol, 2011, P66), this definition focused on the behavior learned by human being as a member of society, it also highlighted the inclusion of culture in the moral aspect as well as the material aspect. The

comprehensiveness of this definition shows the importance of culture as a main base for making change processes in the institution.

Malik BenNabi defines culture as: "a set of moral characters and social values that an individual acquires since his birth, as an initial capital in the environment in which he was born, so culture is the environment in which the individual forms his character and personality" (Ben Nabi, nd, p123) Thus, culture is the template in which the individual grows and imprints his behaviors upon his upbringing.

2.2 *Quality culture*

It is one of the most important concepts to ensure the achievement of quality, as it constitutes the fertile ground to assist in the processes of adopting the total quality policy and applied it in organizations. Quality culture can be defined as follows:

- It is a set of values related to quality which show the organization's ability to confront external conditions that surround it, and to manage its internal affairs and the values and beliefs that are basic guides for culture. (Al-Amiri, 2016, p285.)
- It is one of the factors that have a significant impact in the performance of organization, and plays a role in strengthening values, beliefs and traditions of the employees of the organization ,in order to move towards the application of quality to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of management, and raise the level of flexibility and the ability to compete with other organizations.(AbdAllat, 2015, P23)
- It is also defined as the organizational climate in which groups of workers together perform their assigned tasks, and it has two components on which process conditions are built:

The first component is organizational; it is a structural feature refers to tasks, standards and responsibilities of individuals and service unites .The second component is psychological feature that refers to understanding, flexibility participation, hopes and emotions. (Al–Sawaf & others, 2011, p81)

The previous definitions agreed that the culture of quality is the pattern of cultural behavior that connects between individuals concerning their actions, activities, feelings and the way of doing things, which is characterized by the application of quality principles in transformation processes on the inputs to embody quality in the outputs as a main goal.

2.3 *Total quality*

There are many definitions of total quality according to the different viewpoints of scholars in this subject, we find among them:

- The definition of **Edward Deming**, who is considered the father of quality for being the first to set its basic principles in the late twentieth century, "It is the achievement of needs and expectations of beneficiary in present and future " (Darwish, 2006, p11)

- **Crosby** defined quality on focusing on two aspects:"Do it right the first time", and "Zero Defects", He believes that quality is based on four absolutes of quality which are **the conformity with the requirements of customers** through the application of **preventive activities** that are concerned with the errors prevention before they occur, as it is the only system that produces quality (Vincent Boadu and Larry, pp5-6). For **Crosby,** corrective activities and removal of errors after their occurrence are considered as non-quality, because they increase the cost (Hogue, 1992, p8), and this what led him to say: "**Quality is free but not a gift** ", this can be avoided when administration adopts a prevention-oriented culture, based on training, leadership, discipline, and providing employees with tools, skills and other resources to ensure **Zero Defect** by producing defect -free products and services. So, succeeding in improving quality while reducing the price of non-conformance costs.(Vincent and Larry, p5)

- As for **Joseph Juran**: He is considered one of the first pioneers in quality in addition to "Edward Deming" (Sallis, 2002, P41). He focused on defining quality on three basic processes called "**The quality Trilogy",** quality panning**,** quality control and quality improvement (Juran**,** 1986, p2). He is considered the first to look at quality from the point of view of its uses, and defined it as: appropriateness for use, stressing that it is seen from two angels.

- *The first*: an attempt to reduce defects or disadvantages in the service offered.

- *The second*: an attempt to improve the form of service in order to satisfy customer's needs and gain their satisfaction. (El-Saeed, 2007, p117)

- The European Organization for Quality Control (EOQC) defined total quality as: "the sum of features related to production or services that depend on its own ability to provide needs presented. (Haider, https://www.spu.edu.sy/downloads/files/1520329249_edare.pdf, p21)

2.4. As for total quality in higher education, it means:

- "All features and characteristics related to the educational service that fulfill the needs of students, in addition to being the sum of efforts made by those working in the field of education to raise and improve the educational product unit, in accordance with the wishes of the beneficiary and with the capabilities and features of the educational product unit" .(Saad Khalil, 2011, pp 26-27)

- As it means: performing work in a correct and elaborate manner in accordance with a set of necessary educational standards to raise the level of educational product quality with the

least efforts and cost, achieving educational goals, society goals and fulfilling the labor market's need of scientifically qualified cadres. (King Bin Abdel Aziz Project, p25)

There are two criteria for defining quality in education:

➢ *The first criterion*: It sees the necessity to focus the concept of education quality on the reputation and fame of institution and its resources.

➢ *The second criterion*: It is concerned with promoting and strengthening the concept of quality by applying the philosophy of quality improvement.(King Bin Abdel Aziz Project ,p30)

Through these definitions, it can be said that the total quality in education is a set of features and specifications that include all educational and administrative processes that the higher education sector seeks to achieve in order to move to other stages to achieve the remaining strategic goals of the sector in the short and long term.

3. Quality application in universities at Arab and Western level:

The first school (University) applied quality standards, teachers, students and study curriculum is Al –Mustansiriya school in Baghdad, which was inaugurated by the Abbasid caliph Al-Mustansir Billahin the year (625 Hijri), corresponding to (1227AD), its construction lasted six years and at a cost of 700,000 Dinar. (Shakir Majeed and others, 2014, p13)

At the Western level, the Universities of the Unites states of America are considered the first to apply total quality in higher education by Malcolm Baldrige, who was Minister of commerce in the Reagan government in 1981. He continued to advocate the application of the concept of total quality until his death in 1987, and its actual application in education has become a reality. In 1993, "Ronald Brown" announced the extension of Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) in quality to include education sector as well as the giant American companies (Tuaima, 2006, p27). This award based on a set of principles which are:

- All administrators and faculty members should strive to achieve quality.
- Focus on preventing students from failing rather than studying after their failure.
- Accuracy in the use of statistical control to improve administration processes.
- Interest in initial training for quality management, and each individual in the organization must be trained for quality.
- Necessity of agreeing on clear standards that annually determine the quality of operations and outputs.(Tuaima,2006, p27)

❖ This concept moved to the field of education in the United Kingdom, and with the beginning of the nineties, total quality standards were applied and the interest of the British

International Organization ISO9000 extended to the education sector. (Tuaima, 2006, pp27-28)

❖ The American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) has used the term (CQI) i.e. Continuous Quality Improvement to express any initiative undertaken by educational establishment to improve its quality; it has improved quality in universities according to a two – stage program.

➢ **The first stage (1992-1995):** in which an association of 21universities and

educational institutions was formed, officially working to introduce the total quality management system in their institutions to exchange information and experiences in how to introduce these systems and make them successful, in addition to the permanent quality improvement project to exchange group's experience with the rest of educational institutions wishing to adopt this system.

➢ **The second stage: (1992-1995):** in which a study was conducted on how change the form of organization and the organizational climate in educational institution to facilitate the process of applying quality management system, this stage is to called the organization necessary to improve educational process, its goal was make educational institutions organizations that work continuously to improve the student learning process permanently.(Shihani and others ,2010, pp12-13)

4 .The main models for universities quality assessment

There are several models according to which quality is applied in education and keenness to embody it, regardless of the type, content and source of the model. Among these models we find:

4.1. The first model: this model is based on French traditions, in which a central external government body evaluate the quality of higher education institution,

4.2. The second model: this model is influenced by British tradition, and it sees that evaluating the quality of university is an internal matter carried out by peer -evaluation .

4.3. The third model: influenced by American traditions, where the evaluation procedures are carried out by private institutions and bodies independent of the state ,as well as professional associations and market mechanisms for higher education outputs.

4.4. The fourth model: where the evaluation is carried out by government's organsand the central party. This model prevailed in the Soviet Union and in the countries of the socialist system and in the one-party states.(Shakir Majeed and others, 2014,pp26-27)

However, no matter how different and varied the models, there are a set of basic elements that must be provided in any model to ensure quality in the higher education sector:

- The existence of general vision, important and strategic goals and values of the university or college aimed at ensuring quality.

- Effective leadership and plans to develop this leadership.

- The explicit dedication to all partial systems, as well as processes and standards to achieve quality and ensure the level of the educational program offered.

- Providing programs and policies for the comprehensive strategic development of employees in the organization.

- A comprehensive and integrated system database of quality organized by an integrated series of performance indicators.

- A comprehensive management system that is guided by performance and based on the system entrance.

- An organizational construction and a functional design that maximize effectiveness in the performance of all groups to the essential functions.

- Clear processes and procedures that lead to continuous quality improvement.

- Accuracy in performance measurement by comparing the existing performance with the established and defined criteria for good performance.

- Corrective procedures and an administrative review system to monitor and develop work.(El-Saeed, 2007, p145)

5. **Quality evaluation networks in universities and higher education**

After engineering the culture of the quality in the higher education sector ,and rooting it among its members ,care is taken for the continuity of quality and the application of its principles stipulated by global and international networks and bodies responsible for evaluating and ensuring quality, among which we find:

- The International Network for Quality Assurance in Higher education (INQAAHE).
- European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA)
- The Central and Eastern European Network for Quality assurance in Higher Education (CEE).
- Network of Engineering Institutions in Latin America (REDICA).(Bin Tafat, 2010, p03)
➢ Among the most important principles stipulated are the following:
- Autonomy and independence of those responsible of evaluation processes and quality assurance
- Higher education institutions are obliged to the following evaluation procedures:
• An evaluation that is on two levels, internal (subjective) and external (the opinion of the independent expert)

- Participation of all stakeholders in the evaluation (professors ,administrators, students, former students, social partners, professional associations and encourage participation of foreign experts)
- Publication of the results of evaluation procedures.

6. **The basic values of quality culture**

According to Saliss, quality is a relative concept that carries with it two meanings, one of which is procedural, and concerned with measuring and ensuring conformity to specific specifications. The second meaning which is the transformative meaning of quality, it is related to organizational change and continuous improvement - it is not only limited to the correct performance of things - and it focuses on the intangible aspects of quality (Jeblak, 2021, p3), and this what culture includes.

Mahatma Gandhi says that: "Mental education can only be through mental flexibility, and it is more difficult than physical education, and must be based on science and morals"(Gandhi, nd, p216). So, the process of changing culture requires re-engineering a set of standards and basic values that should be adopted to achieve the goal. The most important of these values are:

- **Focus on the client**: who is the student, community and labor market through understanding his current and future needs and expectations, and achieving his expectations.
- **Leadership**: the vision, goals and strategies within the education system must be unified by leaders, and the educational climate must be created to achieve these goals at a lowest cost.
- **Focus on the means**: it is the essential difference between the concepts of total quality management and the concepts of quality assurance that focus only on the product and solving problems that appear one by one.(Tuaima,2006, p28)
- **Continuous improvement (KAIZEN):** the process of continuous improvement should be directed to support quality values through adopting circles for planning and evaluation.
- **Total participation:** all individuals, units, departments, administrations must participate .as the value of total participation is the responsibility of all (Ibrahim Ahmed, 2002, p170), to ensure the promotion of quality culture in the educational sector.
- **The quick response:** the simultaneous improvement in quality is ensured by the value embodied by the quick response process to requirements of the times.
- **Preventing problems:** it refers to the value of quick action to prevent problems and reduce the cost that they cause, thus ensuring a correct course of action.
- **The long term-view**: it refers to a long term vision and future vision and its embodiment in the form of plans, strategies, resources and continuous training,

implemented by individuals within the institution and all members who contribute to and are responsible for quality.

- **Management by facts**: it means the adoption of reliable source of data, information and statistical analysis about performance, programs, assistive technology, cost and return (Ibrahim Ahmed, 2002, p170), to assist information systems and the feedback mechanisms in obtaining information to enhance decision-making and practicing management by relying on facts. So it is necessary to invest in information technology and related tools to diagnose and solve quality improvement problems. (Al-Harahsha, 2011, p58)

- **Partnership:** this value is represented in agreements with unions, federations and organizations to exchange benefits with the community surrounding the institution.

- **The responsibility of the local community:** the value of the responsibility of the local community highlights the responsibility of the institution and the community in solving problems related the environment, health. (Ibrahim Ahmed, 2002, p171)

By being keen to apply these values that instill a culture of quality and embodying them through solidarity between the education sector and the social environment in which it is located, and each party bearing its responsibility, this contributes to a large extent in determining and setting a correct path towards achieving quality if the factors that would hinder the success of the process are controlled.

7. The difference between items of traditional culture and items of quality culture:
The prevailing culture in the higher education sector is the main driver of the individuals affiliated with it through its influence on all their behaviors and performance of their tasks. So, it either creates a strong motivation for them to work dynamically, and gives them a strong impetus to creativity in their work, or it creates an obstacles to them that prevent them from doing their work and carrying out the tasks entrusted to them. This situation calling for fixing the loopholes that would impede their progress by focusing on foundations and principles on which their culture based on the one hand, and the institutional culture of the sector on the other hand, because of their impact and influence in achieving quality, and trying to invest it in achieving total quality by changing it and adopting quality culture. (Al-Amiri, 2016, p269)

The following table shows a comparison of some items in the traditional culture of the institution and the items to be embodied in order to adopt quality culture.

Comparison field	The tradition culture of the establishment	quality culture
View and vision	Senior management responsibility	Everyone participate
Management's view of employee	Workforce	Human resources
Management style	Management with control	Participative management
Work flow	Vertical flow	Horizontal flow
interest in efforts	Effort for daily wage	Interest in rationalizing efforts
The relationships between departments	Opposing parties	Integration: customers, internal suppliers
Scope of application	A narrow range	Integrative process
Accounting	Individual responsibility	The responsibility of work team

Performance enhancement	Negative reinforcement (punishment for wrongdoing	Positive reinforcement(reward for improvement)
Communications	From top to down	mutual
Decisions	Mandatory orders	Consultation before making decisions
People skills	Narrow specialty	Multiple quality
Work development	Responsibility of superiors	Everyone's responsibility
Attribution of responsibility	Assigned to chiefs only	Assigned to all employee
Training	Developmental duty	Developmental right

Source (Al-Amiri, 2016, p269)

8. **Axes of quality culture engineering in the higher education sector**

The culture of quality in any sector is based on firm foundations that constitute the basic elements in adopting and implementing the quality system in the higher education sector, which are:

8.1. Inputs: They are all elements that represent raw materials for the university, they are considered among the most important factor that are mobilized by the culture of quality and include: the professor, the student, the students' parents, the administration, building and equipment, teaching aids, the environment and ideas related to quality.

8.2. Transfer processes: they are methods of instilling and settling a culture of quality in the higher education sector .Among these processes we find: quality culture, curricula and teaching methods, management methods, spending, educational programs, scientific research, monitoring and evaluation and continuous improvement.

8.3. Outputs: It includes the final results that are reached after the transformation processes that take place on the inputs in the higher education to achieve the desired and planned goals from the beginning, including: achieving the quality of education, social responsibility and community service.

Input

Professors, studentsstudents' parents administration, building and equipment, teaching aids ,the environment ideas related to quality.

Transfer processes

Quality culture, curricula andteaching methods, management methods, spending ,educational programs ,scientific research, monitoring and evaluation continuous improvement.

Outputs

achieving the quality of education,

social responsibility and community service.

Diagram showing the axes of dedicating the quality system in the higher education system (prepared by the researcher)

9. The importance of Quality Culture Engineering in the higher education

"W. Edwards Deming" confirmed that 10 % of the problems that face establishments are caused by the individual problems of workers ,due to the direct intervention of workers and their abilities, values and skills -despite their diversity- in the conduct of all operations that may cause some problems within the institution (Covey,2005, p435), due to the "lack of agreement on appropriate or inappropriate behaviors in situations or general and strategic issues facing the establishment ,and consequently the absence of unified behavioral pattern among employees which deprive the concept of culture itself from its content"(El-Morsi,2006,p16). Malik BenNabi pointed out in his book "**conditions of renaissance**": "culture is like blood which consists of red and white corpuscles which swim in one liquid of " Plasma" to nourish the body, so culture is the blood in the body of the society, nourishing its civilization and carrying the ideas of " the elite" and the ideas of "the public" all of which fit in one fluid of similar dispositions, uniform tendencies and proportionate tastes.(Ben Nabi, nd,p127)

Therefore, announcing a new total quality culture does not take long, but getting hundreds or thousands of employees to behave in a different way takes years. If the administration is not willing to be patient and make effort in planning and leading process, and continuing its approaches towards total quality, it will not achieve significant long-term results (King Bin Abdel Aziz Project, p1). This indicates the need to re-engineer the culture that prevails in the establishment and localize another culture characterized by quality specifications, and provide the necessary means to facilitate its adoption by all members of the sector by changing their cultural behavior to achieve the desired goal. Accordingly, "Deming" confirms that achieving quality requires a transformation in administrative processes and the adoption of a new perception that the administration participates in every detail of its crystallization, in order to able to make all members of the establishment adopt this mental perception of quality, which is more important than focusing on the technical aspect, as it helps to see and understand roles, and because quality does not necessary mean doing things better. In fact, it means performing things in a different way by re-engineering the prevailing culture and changing some of its parts and making adjustments to the details of its components as required to keep pace with the developments of the current era. The reason for the continuous development and progress of the major developed institutions in America and Japan is the interest in collecting information about everyone they deals with ,and about everyone who has a contribution to their success, analyzing information, diagnosing problems and offering solutions according to what keeps pace with the various changes and developments taking place in the internal and external environment, but if it relies on mental perception that does not keep pace with the times or seasonality i.e.it is not fixed, or it is not based on systematic and thoughtful development, all this prevent it from moving on its way to quality.(Covey ,2005, pp 446-447)

10. The steps of quality culture engineering to adopt the quality system in universities:
(Al-Otaibi, 2007, p52)

The process of implementing the quality system in higher education requires establishing a solid foundation; to embrace this system and to ensure its application by preparing for it according to sound foundations represented in re-engineering and instilling the culture of quality, which is a key factor in the voluntary turnout to embody the items of the quality system, and this is done through the following:

- Adopting the project of implementing the quality system, and announcing it by holding a meeting for the workers in the sector ,discussing their opinions, answering their questions, clarifying the importance of application the quality system and its steps, its advantages and the expected obstacles in its application.
- Educating employees about the quality system by holding training courses on the quality system, and dissemination of the quality policy within the sector.
- Forming team work, and distributing job description for employees and responsibilities and operations among the work team, each according to his task.
- The practical beginning of the application of the quality system,
- The beginning of the internal audit (determining the audit teams, putting the audit plan and training the team).
- Calling the certificate awarding companies and obtaining the ISO certification.
- Declaration of success.

11. **Means of engineering a culture of quality in the higher education sector**

Re-engineering the prevailing culture in the sector and changing it with a quality culture is vital to achieving the main objective like achieving a good reputation, and possessing a good arrangement within the rest of the institutions of the same sector at the Arab and International level ,and this shows the important of the matter, which calls for harnessing a set of means and methods. The most important of which are the following:

- Create a quality website on the Internet.
- Bulletins and brochures about total quality.
- Total quality training courses.
- Field visits to establishments that apply total quality.
- Distribution of videos or CDs about total quality.
- Providing information on the internal Internet.
- Participation in seminars and meetings inside and outside.
- Trying to spread some principles of total quality among the employees of the institution.(El- wurthan,2008, pp 28,29)

12. **Advantages of quality culture engineering in the higher education sector:**

Re-engineering the prevailing culture in the higher education and localizing a culture of quality brings many advantages to all sector axes and its constituent members, among these advantages, we find (Al-Hariri, 2011, p24)

12.1. The student:

- Improving his motivation to learn.

- Constantly improving his learning results (enthusiasm and high self-esteem).

- His growing commitment to improving his learning.

- There are more joy and fun in learning due to the absence of the fear factor.

12.2. Professor

- Less effort in the learning process, as the student takes responsibility for his learning.

- Increasing his enthusiasm for improving education as a result of appreciating his efforts and his participation in the decisions of the educational institution.

- Team work with colleagues, educational management and parents to improve learning process .

- Good relation with students.

12.3. Management

- Improving the productivity of students, professors and employees.

- Improving the administration's relationship with parents and community.

- Less effort in the work of the head of the administration by delegating.

- A collaborative learning environment (work team – learning team).

- Management focus on the satisfaction of students, professors, employees and parents.

12.4. Parents

- A well - developed relationship with educational institution's management and teachers.

- Increased satisfaction with the school's performance for continuous improvement in their children's learning.

- Their interference in the methods of raising and educating their children through their suggestions and aspirations.

- Confidence in the performance of the educational institution.

- Improving their communication with the educational institution.

12.5. Educational institution system

- Searching for the roots of problems and solving them with a scientific approach, and setting procedures to ensure that they do not recur.
- Teamwork in the school (functional work teams –learning teams).
- Improving the motivation of students and teachers to learn and teach by meeting their aspirations.
- Optimal use of time as the most valuable resource for the education institution and education system (learning opportunities)

13. **Objectives of quality culture engineering in education**

The main objective of establishing and engineering a culture of quality in universities, and ensuring the continuity of the embodiment of quality in the higher education sector in the short and long term is as follow (Mujahid, 2009-2010).

-    Encouraging excellence, demonstrating creativity, mastery of work and good management.
-    Achieving qualitative leap in the educational process.
-    Developing work methods, upgrading employees' skills and abilities, and making a change in the quality of performance.
-    Improving the work environment and reducing routine work procedures, and shortening them in terms of time and cost.
-    Encouraging participation in the educational institution's activities and events.
-    Strengthening loyalty to work in the educational institution.
-    Educational communication with government agencies that implement quality.
-    Fulfilling requirements of students, parents and society.

14 .*CONCLUSION* :

The higher education sector is of great importance, due to the great role it plays in the formation and graduation of elites in multiple discipline .It is the backbone of the future and removes the obstacles that hinder the pace of development in various fields, and this requires work on continuous improvement of the sector in the line with the changes that occur at the national and global levels, but it faces a set of challenges that make it difficult to achieve this, so this study concluded a set of results, the most important of which are the following:

-    The need to study the infrastructure of the higher education sector, and develop policies, strategies and programs that include all the cultural and practical aspects of the sector and provide the necessary capabilities needed for its development.

- Making the quality of higher education a goal that should be worked on, and then become a means to achieve the rest of the sector's goals.

- Re-engineering the prevailing culture within the sector, and working to instill a culture of quality and upbringing individuals belonging to the sectors on its principles and values, and urging them to adhere them.

- Continuous training of individuals on the necessary means and techniques for spreading the culture of quality; to ensure that the quality of higher education is applied correctly from the first time without defects, and to reduce the cost resulting from corrective activities.

- Focusing on providing quality in the sector's outputs, meeting the needs of all parties dealing with the higher education sector and matches the requirements of the labor market.

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