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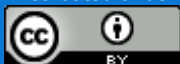
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Comparative Analysis of Higher Education Quality Assessment Processes

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ABSTRACT

Introduction/Objective: This article examines methodologies for assessing the quality of higher education in five countries: Brazil, Portugal, Mozambique, the United States, and the United Kingdom. **Method:** We employed an exploratory approach, combining documentary and bibliographical research to examine and compare the objects, objectives, instruments, indicators, criteria, policies, and guidelines used in the assessment of higher education quality. **Results:** The results highlight a remarkable global convergence in the conduct of assessments, demonstrating a collective effort to ensure quality and promote academic excellence on an international scale. However, substantial differences emerge in the details and implementation of assessments. These divergences reflect cultural nuances and the specific needs of each higher education system, emphasizing the importance of adaptive approaches to quality assessment. **Conclusion:** The detailed differences in the implementation of assessments reflect cultural variations and the specific needs of each educational context. Future studies may include more detailed analyses and the exploration of new indicators, such as artificial intelligence, to further elevate international standards of higher education quality.

KEYWORDS

Quality of higher education. Quality evaluation. Educational technologies. Global higher education. International comparison.

Análise Comparativa dos Processos de Avaliação da Qualidade do Ensino Superior

RESUMO

Introdução/Objetivo: Este artigo analisa as metodologias de avaliação da qualidade do ensino superior em cinco países: Brasil, Portugal, Moçambique, Estados Unidos e o Reino Unido. **Método:** Empregamos uma abordagem exploratória, combinando pesquisas documental e bibliográfica para examinar e comparar objetos, objetivos, instrumentos, indicadores, critérios, políticas e diretrizes usados na avaliação da qualidade do ensino superior. **Resultados:** Os resultados destacam uma notável convergência global na condução das avaliações, demonstrando um esforço coletivo para assegurar a qualidade e promover a excelência acadêmica em escala internacional. Entretanto, surgem diferenças substanciais nos pormenores e na implementação das avaliações. Essas divergências refletem as nuances culturais e as necessidades específicas de cada sistema de ensino superior, enfatizando a importância de abordagens adaptativas para a avaliação da qualidade. **Conclusão:** As diferenças detalhadas e na implementação das avaliações refletem variações culturais e necessidades específicas de cada contexto educacional. Futuros estudos podem incluir análises mais detalhadas e a exploração de novos indicadores, como inteligência artificial, para elevar os padrões da qualidade do ensino superior internacionalmente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Qualidade do ensino superior. Avaliação de qualidade. Tecnologias educacionais. Educação superior global. Comparação internacional.

Análisis comparativo de los procesos de evaluación de la calidad de la educación superior

RESUMEN

Introducción/Objetivo: Este artículo analiza las metodologías de evaluación de la calidad de la educación superior en cinco países: Brasil, Portugal, Mozambique, Estados Unidos y el Reino Unido. **Método:** Empleamos un enfoque exploratorio, combinando investigación documental y bibliográfica para examinar y comparar los objetos, objetivos, instrumentos, indicadores, criterios, políticas y directrices utilizados en la evaluación de la calidad de la educación superior. **Resultados:** Los resultados resaltan una notable convergencia global en la realización de las evaluaciones, demostrando un esfuerzo colectivo para garantizar la calidad y promover la excelencia académica a nivel internacional. Sin embargo, surgen diferencias sustanciales en los detalles y la implementación de las evaluaciones. Estas divergencias reflejan matices culturales y las necesidades específicas de cada sistema de educación superior, enfatizando la importancia de enfoques adaptativos para la evaluación de la calidad. **Conclusión:** Las diferencias detalladas en la implementación de las evaluaciones reflejan variaciones culturales y necesidades específicas de cada contexto educativo. Estudios futuros pueden incluir análisis más detallados y la exploración de nuevos indicadores, como la inteligencia artificial, para elevar aún más los estándares de calidad de la educación superior a nivel internacional.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Calidad de la educación superior. Evaluación de calidad. Tecnologías educativas. Educación superior global. Comparación internacional.

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Introduction

Evaluating the quality of higher education (QHE) has been a concern in different parts of the world. In this sense, evaluation models and methods are being developed to promote quality improvement and guarantee excellence in higher education. However, there are significant differences between countries in terms of the evaluation processes adopted, which can affect the effectiveness of public policies and initiatives to improve QHE, and not only that, because the diversity of approaches, according to Noaman (2015), can make it difficult to compare and identify best practices.

According to Sousa (2017), the evaluation of QHE should be based on clear and objective criteria, considering aspects such as the quality of teachers, the quality of courses and the quality of infrastructure. In this sense, it is important that the evaluation models and methods adopted in different countries are compared in order to identify the similarities, strengths and weaknesses of each.

This study aims to carry out a comparative analysis of QHE assessment processes in different countries, specifically Brazil, Portugal, Mozambique, the United States and the United Kingdom. These countries were selected on the basis of the *QS World University Rankings 2022*¹. By comparing these countries, we aimed to identify the similarities and differences in the QHE evaluation process between Portuguese-speaking countries and the two best ranked countries in the world.

This analysis, according to Marinho (2016), will allow a critical reflection on the implications of different assessment models and methods for improving QHE, motivating the need for a deeper and more systematic understanding of QHE assessment processes in different countries.

The selection was limited to a few Portuguese-speaking countries and the top two globally in the QS World University Rankings, measured by the ratio of students to professors, based on the assumption that quality increases with smaller classes (Morosini, 2014). Although it is crucial to understand quality, Biage et al. (2015) and Liu (2016) explain that it is influenced by various factors, such as government policies, academic culture, national traditions and educational history.

It is in this context that the relevance of exploring the different quality assessment processes through a comparative approach in the proposed countries is justified. According to Olmos-Gómez et al. (2021), this approach is essential for promoting academic excellence, the professional development of teachers and student satisfaction.

¹ <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2022>

Based on this contribution, Moraes and Kalnin (2018) explain that QHE is a complex and multifaceted concept, in which the exploration of data from the systems aims to enable a more precise and rigorous analysis of the data and a deeper understanding of the different QHE evaluation processes.

This article is structured as follows. The next section describes the fundamentals and concepts related to quality assessment in undergraduate courses, as described in the current literature. Related studies are also presented. This is followed by a description of the analysis methodology used to compare the quality models. The selected models are then presented and discussed, based on the methodology presented. Finally, the final considerations of the study are presented.

Literature Review

The evaluation of CHE is a relevant and complex topic that involves various dimensions and perspectives. In this sense, the literature addresses the topic through different sub-themes, such as concepts and definitions related to the evaluation of CHE, evaluation models and methods used in different countries, as well as different studies that have compared the evaluation of CHE. In this section, each of these sub-themes will be discussed in order to provide an overview of the main approaches and contributions to the evaluation of QHE.

Concepts and Definitions Related to QHE Evaluation

There are many significant challenges to defining quality. It is considered to be an indescribable term and a multidimensional concept, due to the existence of a wide variety of interpretations, depending on the points of view of different stakeholders. In this sense, this study defines quality, based on the arguments of the authors Schindler *et al.* (2015), as something that is not static, but rather a dynamic and ever-changing quest for excellence, which must be considered in the broader educational, economic, political and social context.

According to Rocha and Baniski (2020), the definition of performance evaluation models can be grouped according to their purpose. Educational or formative models aim to develop and improve the quality of the work produced by the institution being evaluated and are characterized by an emphasis on qualitative analysis and by encouraging the involvement of all segments of the institution in the construction and execution of the process. This model is participatory and more democratic, promoting a more comprehensive and effective evaluation.

On the other hand, the regulatory models described by the same authors aim to guarantee compliance with the system's pre-established operating rules, thus ensuring the

level of quality in the work of the institutions being evaluated. This model stands out for its emphasis on quantitative analysis and its technocratic and centralized approach. This form of evaluation can be useful in situations where a more objective and impartial verification of performance is required, but it may not be as effective in identifying nuances and particularities specific to the context being evaluated.

Based on the information provided, it is possible to create a more comprehensive and up-to-date definition of quality. This definition must consider the dynamism of the concept and the importance of participatory and democratic evaluation models. In addition, it is necessary to consider small variations in specific particularities and ensure compliance with pre-established rules and standards.

Evaluation Models and Methods Used in the Selected Countries

Evaluating QHE is an important issue all over the world. Countries have adopted a variety of models and methodologies to assess the quality of their institutions. This study describes the QHE assessment models adopted in Brazil, Portugal, Mozambique, the United States and the United Kingdom.

In Brazil, QHE assessment is carried out by the Ministry of Education (MEC) through Law No. 10.861/2004, which establishes the National Higher Education Assessment System (NHEAS). The National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP) conducts the evaluation, and it focuses on higher education institutions (L10861, 2023).

The evaluation model used consists of three dimensions: the evaluation of teaching conditions, the evaluation of teaching staff and the evaluation of the results achieved by students. The evaluation methodology includes document analysis, on-site visits and interviews with students, teachers and managers (*Avaliação in Loco*, 2023).

In Portugal, the QHE assessment is carried out by the Higher Education Assessment and Accreditation Agency (A3ES). The object of evaluation is higher education institutions and their courses. The evaluation model used consists of three dimensions: the evaluation of teaching and learning, the evaluation of research and development and the evaluation of service to the community. The evaluation methodology includes document analysis, on-site visits and interviews with students, teachers and managers (A3ES M, 2023).

In Mozambique, the evaluation of QHE is carried out by the National Council for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (CNAQ). This body is responsible for overseeing the quality and evaluation of higher education institutions in the country. The object of evaluation is higher education institutions and their courses. The evaluation model used consists of three dimensions: the evaluation of the quality of teaching, the evaluation of the quality of research and the evaluation of the quality of service to the community. The

evaluation methodology includes document analysis, on-site visits and interviews with students, teachers and managers (SINAQHE, 2023).

In the United States, the evaluation of QHE is carried out by different accreditation agencies, such as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, among others. The United States Department of Education (USDE) is responsible for ensuring that accreditation agencies comply with the criteria and standards established for the evaluation of QHE in the country (USDE, 2023).

The object of evaluation is higher education institutions and their academic programs (USDE, 2023). Its evaluation model is based on quality criteria, including institutional planning, the institution's mission and objectives, the quality of teaching staff, the quality of physical and financial resources, among others. The evaluation methodology includes document analysis, on-site visits and interviews with students, teachers and managers (USDE, 2023).

In the UK, QHE assessment is carried out by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The object of evaluation is higher education institutions and their academic programs. The evaluation model used is based on quality criteria, including teaching and learning, research, the student experience and the quality of institutional management (QAA, 2023).

The evaluation methodology includes document analysis, on-site visits and interviews with students, teachers and managers. In addition, the QAA uses a risk rating system to identify higher education institutions that require more detailed assessment (QAA Quality, 2023).

Higher Education System in Selected Countries

The higher education system varies considerably between countries. In those selected for analysis in this study, the scenario is no different. Each one has its own characteristics, structure and fundamental policies, as we will see below.

In Brazil, the system is known for its diversity, with a range of public and private universities offering a wide variety of academic programs. Universities offer undergraduate and graduate programs, including Master's and Doctoral degrees (Diniz and Goergen, 2019). According to information provided by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP), admission to public universities often depends on performance in the National High School Exam (ENEM) (INEP, 2023), while research and innovation policies are promoted alongside efforts to increase the inclusion of underrepresented groups.

In Portugal, the higher education system is made up of universities and polytechnic institutes that offer a variety of programs. According to the Directorate-General for Higher Education - DGES (2023), this level of education is organized in a binary system that integrates university education and polytechnic education. This organization has a structure based on 4 cycles: one cycle of short-term studies, which does not confer an academic degree, and three cycles of studies leading to the academic degrees of bachelor, master and doctor (Direção-geral do Ensino Superior, 2023).

Universities and polytechnic institutes provide undergraduate and postgraduate courses, and admission is generally based on secondary school grades, often accompanied by specific exams (DGES, 2023). The country emphasizes interdisciplinary research and international collaboration, while aligning curricula with the needs of the job market.

On the other hand, in Mozambique, the system is overseen by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education through the National Directorate of Higher Education. According to Law No. 1/2023 of March 17, which establishes the legal regime of the Higher Education Subsystem, the system offers undergraduate, master's and doctoral programs, with a focus on research and innovation to address socio-economic challenges.

The country seeks to include under-represented groups in higher education and promotes international collaboration to share knowledge and practical solutions. Law No. 1/2023, (2023), further explains that access to higher education is determined by entrance exams and other specific tests, varying according to the institution and the course, as long as they have completed the 2nd cycle of General Secondary Education, Professional Technical or equivalent. Study programs include bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees (Mozambique, 2023).

In the United States, the higher education system is diverse and encompasses a wide variety of institutions, such as: public universities, private universities and community colleges (U.S. Department of Education - HE, 2023). According to the U.S. department of Education - L&G (2023), universities offer undergraduate and graduate programs with varied admission criteria. They stand out for valuing research and innovation, promoting collaborations between institutions and the private sector. Universities have the autonomy to define curricula and academic standards. The United States Department of Education (USDE) oversees and formulates policies related to education and accreditation agencies assess the quality of higher education institutions in the country. The system attracts students from all over the world because of its reputation for quality and flexibility.

In the UK, the higher education system is known for its academic excellence and diversity of institutions. According to Universities UK (2023), the country is made up of recognized universities and colleges offering a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses (Universities UK, 2023). Admission to higher education often depends on secondary school grades, supplemented by interviews in some cases (UCAS, 2023). The UK values research, specialization and maintains rigorous quality standards in higher education, also

promoting academic internationalization (British Council - Education UK, 2023). In addition, the Office for Students (OfS) in England and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in Scotland are bodies responsible for overseeing and regulating higher education in their respective jurisdictions (OfS, 2023; SFC, 2023).

The next section presents the higher education systems of each country in detail. This will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the different realities of higher education evaluation, justifying the motivation for carrying out this study. Through this contextualized analysis, it will be possible to move on to comparing higher education quality assessment policies in the countries in question, considering their criteria and privileged dimensions.

Studies comparing the evaluation of QHE in different countries

Some previous studies have compared QHE evaluation processes in different countries. For example, the study by Rocha and Baniski (2020) analyzed the quality assessment systems in higher education adopted by the Universidade Estadual Unioeste and the Universidade Estadual de Ponta Grossa (UEPG). To this end, they used a qualitative approach and content analysis of institutional documents.

The aim was to understand the QHE indicators and assess the effectiveness of the evaluation systems adopted by the institutions. The results suggest that both systems have evaluation characteristics based on regulatory models that seek to ensure compliance with the system's pre-established operating rules but are not convergent with educational or formative evaluation models (Rocha and Baniski 2020). The conclusion points to the need to improve evaluation systems, considering the specific characteristics of each institution and encouraging the involvement of all segments in pedagogical practices and evaluation.

Another article deals with "Higher education assessment systems in Portugal and Brazil", by Guimarães and Esteves (2018). The study presents a comparative analysis of the higher education assessment systems in Portugal and Brazil, with the aim of identifying similarities and differences between the two countries and discussing the possible implications of these differences.

The contribution of this article lies in the comparative analysis of assessment systems between two Portuguese-speaking countries with different historical and cultural contexts. From the analysis, it is possible to identify different approaches, strategies and challenges faced by higher education assessment systems in each country. The article also discusses the influence of these differences on evaluation processes and QHE.

In parallel, the authors Özcan, Kalayci and Li (2022) address the importance of assessing the quality of higher education institutions in the face of economic, cultural,

political and social changes around the world, which have a major impact on higher education. With the expansion of the functions of higher education institutions and their growing influence on society, the demand for higher education institutions is increasing in terms of education, research and service to society.

The study aimed to analyze and compare the institutional quality assessment processes applied in the Turkish, European and American higher education systems. In addition, it aimed to contribute to Turkey's Higher Education Quality Council, quality commissions in higher education institutions and other researchers who will conduct scientific studies on this subject.

The article indicates that although the quality assessment processes applied are generally similar in terms of basic objectives, dimensions assessed, assessment approach, people involved in implementing the assessment and type of assessment, there are differences in the aspects of management, coordination and recognition of practices in the countries' higher education systems.

The study concludes that, considering national circumstances, institutional quality assessment processes in the Turkish higher education system should be organized and implemented systematically to ensure the practice of quality higher education.

Roberto, Carlos and Dias (2021) carried out a study aimed at evaluating and comparing the quality standards of higher education institutions (HEIs) in both Brazil and Australia, given the similarities between the two models, as well as proposing alternatives and solutions for the Brazilian model. The contribution of the research is to offer a critical analysis of the evaluation process of Brazilian HEIs, pointing to the need to create a National Agency for Higher Education in Brazil, with a view to excellence in higher education in the country.

The conclusion of this study demonstrates the evolution of the sector's regulations since the 1980s, analyzing the National Student Performance Exam (ENADE) as an instrument of this evaluation, comparing the Brazilian model with the Australian model and discussing possible ways forward for the provision of better quality higher education by the country's publicly traded HEIs.

Durante and Da Fonseca (2012) present a comparative study of quality assessment in higher education in three countries: Brazil, Chile and Colombia. The analysis is based on Popper's perspective and highlights the importance of combining qualitative and quantitative factors in quality assessment. The text highlights that the subjectivity of the evaluators and the objectivity of the evaluation instruments are relevant issues for the evaluation of quality in higher education, and that the evaluation must be constructive and emancipatory, recognizing that there is no perfect instrument for evaluating a concept as subjective as quality.

Pereira, Araujo and Machado (2016) discuss and compare the accreditation and assessment systems in Germany, the United Kingdom and Brazil. In their study, the authors contextualize and map the countries' scenarios and also discuss the quality assurance mechanisms in higher education assessment and accreditation processes. The authors' contribution to the study is based on comparing the accreditation and evaluation methodologies in force in the countries' agencies and analyzing how quality policies in higher education are validated. The results showed some similarities in the quality assurance mechanisms, even considering the different educational policies.

These studies provide an important basis for comparative analysis of QHE evaluation processes in different countries, including Brazil, Portugal, Mozambique, the United States and the United Kingdom. However, there are still gaps in the literature regarding a more in-depth comparative analysis in relation to the selected countries in particular. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by identifying the similarities, strengths and weaknesses of the QHE assessment systems in each of these countries.

Methodology

In order to carry out a comparative analysis of the QHE evaluation processes in the selected countries, exploratory research was adopted. According to Rummert and Ventura (2017), this type of research follows technical procedures based on bibliographical research in which works dealing with the research topics were surveyed for their theoretical-scientific nature. It is also based on documentary research (Rummert; Ventura, 2017) as it provides a mapping of different methods and methodologies for evaluating QHE by searching official/legal documents corresponding to each country in order to understand the differences and similarities between them.

Data collection was carried out through a systematic literature review which included scientific articles on studies that address the comparison of QHE assessment systems. The inclusion criteria for the selection of studies were: (1) studies published between 2010 and 2022; (2) studies that address the comparison of QHE assessment methods in different countries, (3) studies written in English and Portuguese.

The exclusion criteria were: (1) studies dealing with levels of education other than higher education; (2) studies dealing with the evaluation of specific courses or programs rather than the general evaluation of QHE. From the results, 5 studies were selected for the literature review.

For the comparative analysis, only official documents from each country's QHE evaluators and regulators were considered. The selection criteria was based on the 2022 QS World University Rankings. The top 2 positions of the Portuguese-speaking countries and the top 2 in the world ranking were extracted, including Brazil and Portugal, the United States and the United Kingdom. In addition, Mozambique was added to the list because it is the

country of one of the authors and because it is one of the countries where the current quality assessment system is being analyzed.

The data was collected from the official documents of each country and organized into a matrix, which included the following topics: (1) object to be evaluated and objective of the evaluation, (2) form of the evaluation, who evaluates and what metrics are used, (3) instruments and elements of the evaluation, (4) indicators and criteria used in the evaluation, (5) evaluation methodologies, and (6) policies and guidelines.

The comparative analysis was carried out using an interpretative synthesis approach, which made it possible to identify the similarities, strengths and weaknesses of the QHE evaluation systems in each country. Based on the results of the analysis, conclusions and recommendations were formulated to improve the QHE evaluation processes in the selected countries.

Results and Discussion

The results of the comparative analysis of the QHE evaluation processes in the selected countries are presented below, based on the topics in the analysis matrix.

Brazil

The object of the evaluation is the higher education institution, the aim of which is to improve QHE in the country. The evaluation is carried out by the Ministry of Education (MEC) through Law No. 10.861/2004, which establishes the National Higher Education Evaluation System (NHEAS). The indicators used include student performance, infrastructure, teaching staff, institutional management, among others (L10.861, 2023).

The assessment instruments and elements include institutional assessment, course assessment and student performance assessment. The criteria used in the evaluation include ENADE scores, general course index (IGC), teaching staff and infrastructure. Evaluation methodologies include document analysis, on-site visits and interviews with the academic community. The policies and guidelines are defined in the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law and in the official NHEAS documents (NHEAS, 2021).

Portugal

The object of the assessment is the higher education institution and the aim is to guarantee QHE in Portugal. The assessment is carried out by the Higher Education Assessment and Accreditation Agency (A3ES). The indicators used include teaching quality,

scientific research, internationalization, institutional management, among others (A3ES Overview, 2023).

The evaluation instruments and elements include institutional evaluation, course evaluation and student performance evaluation. The criteria used in the evaluation include teaching staff, teaching quality, scientific research and institutional management. Evaluation methodologies include document analysis, on-site visits and interviews with the academic community. The policies and guidelines are defined in Decree-Law 369/2007.

Mozambique

The object of the evaluation is the higher education institution and the aim is to guarantee QHE in the country. The evaluation was carried out by the National Council for the Evaluation of Higher Education Quality (CNAQHE). The indicators used include teaching quality, scientific research, infrastructure, teaching staff, among others (Decree 63/2007, SINAQHE).

CNAQHE uses various instruments to assess QHE in Mozambique, including institutional self-evaluation, external evaluation and inspection visits. CNAQHE carries out inspection visits to higher education institutions to check the physical conditions, resources and infrastructure available.

The elements of the evaluation include institutional evaluation and course evaluation. The criteria used to evaluate include the quality of teaching and learning, quality of research and development, university extension and community services, institutional governance and management, infrastructure and equipment (Decree 63/2007, SINAQHE).

The instruments used include institutional self-evaluation, external evaluation and inspection visits. The methodology is based on a peer evaluation approach, in which external evaluators assess the quality of higher education institutions based on predefined indicators and criteria (Decree 63/2007, SINAQHE).

Policies: The policies used to improve QHE include the creation of new universities and colleges, the introduction of new study programs, the development of partnerships with foreign higher education institutions and the promotion of research and development. The policies and guidelines are set out in Law No. 27/2009.

United States

The object of the evaluation is the higher education institution and the aim is to guarantee QHE in the country. The evaluation is carried out by regional and national accreditation agencies approved by the USDE. The indicators used include quality of teaching, research, infrastructure, faculty, among others (USDE, 2023).

The main QHE assessment instruments in the United States include institutional assessment, program assessment, student outcomes assessment, university rankings and self-evaluation. The criteria used to assess quality vary according to the instruments used, but generally include the quality of faculty, infrastructure and resources, research and innovation, training and academic outcomes, student satisfaction and employability of graduates (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

The QHE assessment is important to ensure that institutions and programs meet rigorous quality standards and prepare students for success in their careers. Policies and guidelines are set by the U.S. Department of Education and regional and national accrediting agencies (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

The United Kingdom

The object of the evaluation is the higher education institution and the aim is to guarantee QHE in the country. The evaluation was carried out by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The indicators used include the quality of teaching, research, infrastructure and teaching staff, among others.

The main instruments used to assess QHE include: The National Student Survey (NSS) which is an opinion survey carried out annually with higher education students, which assesses the quality of teaching, the academic experience and student satisfaction. And the Research Excellence Framework (REF): this is a system for assessing the quality of research conducted by higher education institutions in the UK. It is carried out every five years and assesses the quality and impact of research in different areas of study (QAA, 2023).

The criteria used include: the Quality of teaching: assesses the quality of academic programs, the student experience and the effectiveness of the teaching methods used by higher education institutions; the quality of research: assesses the quality and impact of research carried out by higher education institutions in different areas of study; and the quality of facilities: assesses the quality of facilities, infrastructure and resources available to the institution's students and researchers (QAA Quality, 2023).

The methodology used is based on a combination of indicators, instruments and criteria. The assessment is conducted by independent bodies, such as the Office for Students

(OfS) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), which use quantitative and qualitative data to assess QHE across the country. The policies and guidelines are set out in the QAA quality framework (QAA Quality, 2023).

From the analysis, it emerged that the selected countries have similar assessments with regard to the objects, objectives, instruments and elements of the assessment, indicators and criteria, assessment methodologies, policies and guidelines. In the next section, we present (Table 1) a description of the main points of the evaluation by country. It should be noted that the agencies responsible for assessment vary in each country and each has its own policies and guidelines, but the quality of teaching is the common objective.

Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis is a methodological approach that was used essentially to understand the similarities and differences in the elements of QHE evaluation and the policies adopted in the countries studied. The aim is to provide a more comprehensive view and critical appraisal of evaluation processes.

In this context, we present a comparative analysis of the evaluation elements and policies considered in the five selected countries: Brazil, Portugal, Mozambique, the United States and the United Kingdom, as shown in chart 1.

Chart 1: Description of evaluation elements and policies.

Brazil	Indicators	Student performance, infrastructure, teaching staff, institutional management, among others.
	Instruments	Institutional evaluation, course evaluation and student performance evaluation (Law 10.861, 2023).
	Criteria	These include ENADE scores, the general course index (IGC), teaching staff and infrastructure.
	Methodology	Document analysis, on-site visits and interviews with the academic community.
	Politics	National Education Guidelines and Bases Law and in the official NHEAS documents (Law 10.861, 2023).
Portugal	Indicators	Quality of teaching staff, quality of infrastructure and resources, quality of research and innovation, quality of training and academic results, student satisfaction and employability of graduates.
	Instruments	Study Cycle Accreditation System (SCAS), the institutional evaluation process and the evaluation of undergraduate and postgraduate courses, external evaluations and institutional self-evaluation.
	Criteria	Quality of teaching staff, quality of infrastructure and resources, quality of research and innovation, quality of training and academic results, student satisfaction and employability of graduates.
	Methodology	Continuous and formative evaluation approach carried out in several cycles over a given period. Evaluation is carried out using instruments such as questionnaires, external evaluations, institutional self-assessment, document analysis and on-site visits.
	Politics	Decree-Law no. 369/2007 (A3ES, 2023).
Mozambique	Indicators	Course completion rate, Employability of graduates. Number of publications and research projects, participation in international research networks, assessment of the quality of teaching staff.
	Instruments	Institutional self-evaluation, External evaluation, Inspection

		visit.
	Criteria	Quality of teaching and learning, Quality of research and development, University extension and community services, Governance and institutional management, Infrastructure and equipment.
	Methodology	Peer review approach, in which external evaluators assess the quality of higher education institutions based on predefined indicators and criteria.
	Politics	Law 27/2009 (SINAQHE, 2007).
United States	Indicators	Quality of teaching, research, infrastructure, teaching staff, etc.
	Instruments	Institutional evaluation, Program evaluation, Evaluation of student results, University rankings, Self-evaluation.
	Criteria	Quality of teaching staff, quality of infrastructure and resources, quality of research and innovation, quality of training and academic results, student satisfaction and employability of graduates.
	Methodology	It varies according to the assessment instrument used, but generally involves the following elements: Standards and criteria, Data collection, Data analysis, Evaluation report.
	Politics	Defined by the U.S. Department of Education and regional and national accrediting agencies (USDE, 2023).
United Kingdom	Indicators	Student satisfaction, Employability rate, Research quality:
	Instruments	National Student Survey (NSS) e Research Excellence Framework (REF)
	Criteria	Quality of teaching, Quality of research, Quality of facilities.
	Methodology	It is based on a combination of indicators, instruments and criteria and uses quantitative and qualitative data to assess QHE throughout the country.
	Politics	Reference framework for the AAF (AAF, 2023).

Source: prepared by the authors

Based on the data collected on the QHE evaluation processes in the selected countries, it was possible to identify some similarities and differences between the evaluation systems. One of the main similarities was the importance attached to guaranteeing QHE to ensure the credibility of institutions and courses. All the countries selected have assessment systems that aim to guarantee the quality and continuous improvement of higher education.

However, some important differences were also identified between the evaluation processes in the different countries. One of the main differences concerns the centralization or decentralization of evaluation systems. While in some countries, such as Portugal and Mozambique, the evaluation systems are centralized and coordinated by specific government agencies, in the United States and the United Kingdom, the systems are decentralized and coordinated by different entities and government bodies.

In terms of similarities, we can highlight the use of detailed and specific evaluation criteria and standards, the use of external evaluators and on-site visits, as well as cooperation with educational institutions. In addition, some of the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation process can be highlighted, as shown in Chart 2.

Chart 2: Overview of Strengths and Weaknesses

Country	Strengths	Weaknesses
Brazil	It uses a variety of indicators, including ENADE performance and infrastructure.	Lack of transparency and reliability in evaluations.
Portugal	It highlights the importance of internationalization and scientific research.	Unclear evaluation criteria.
Mozambique	It values the quality of teaching, scientific research and infrastructure.	Lack of resources to carry out more thorough evaluations.
United States	It uses regional and national accreditation agencies with rigorous evaluations and prestige.	Universities may have an influence on the choice of accreditation agencies.
United Kingdom	It emphasizes the quality of teaching and research, as well as a holistic approach to evaluation.	Universities may have an influence on the choice of accreditation agencies.

Source: prepared by the authors.

It is important to note that the information presented in the table above only gives an overview of each country's characteristics in terms of strengths and weaknesses in the QHE evaluation process. Each system has its own particularities and unique challenges. Therefore, there is a need for constant evolution and improvement of these processes in order to guarantee academic excellence and the QHE worldwide.

Final considerations

The aim of this research was to carry out a comparative analysis of Higher Education Quality Assessment Processes in different countries, in order to identify their similarities and differences. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that QHE evaluation is a concern shared by several countries, and that there is a certain uniformity in the way these evaluations are conducted.

By observing the similarities in the objects, objectives, instruments, indicators, criteria, methodologies, policies and guidelines used, it can be seen that there is a global effort to guarantee QHE and promote academic excellence at an international level. However, it is important to note that there are differences in the details and implementation of the assessments in each country, which may reflect cultural differences and the specific needs and priorities of each educational context.

As far as limitations are concerned, one of the main issues is the variation in the indicators used in the assessment processes between countries, which makes it difficult to directly compare the results obtained. In addition, the lack of uniformity in the assessment methodology is also a limitation, with variations in the elements assessed and the approach used.

In order to overcome these limitations and make progress in improving the QHE, it is important to consider some recommendations for future work. One suggestion is to carry out more in-depth comparative studies between countries, as well as including new indicators and assessment elements, including the employability of students after training.

Another recommendation is the use of innovative technologies, such as artificial intelligence, to help analyze the data collected in evaluation processes. These technologies can make evaluation processes more precise and efficient, as well as enabling the identification of patterns and trends that can be used to guide decision-making in the field of higher education.

Finally, it should be noted that the recommendations presented should be adapted to the specific realities and needs of each country and educational institution. It is essential that evaluation processes are conducted systematically and transparently, with the participation of all those involved in the academic community and with the aim of promoting continuous improvement in QHE.

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