

A critical analysis of quality culture

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Abstract

As part of the process of enhancing quality, quality culture has become a taken-for-granted concept intended to support development and improvement processes in higher education. By taking a theoretical approach to examining quality culture, starting with a scholarly examination of the concept of culture, and exploring how it is related to quality, quality improvement and quality assurance, the aim of this paper is to create a better understanding of how one can make sense of quality culture, its boundaries but also its links to the fundamental processes of teaching and learning.

Keywords: quality culture, internal quality assurance, improvement, accountability, transformative learning

Introduction

Quality assurance is now an established part of higher education in most parts of the world. INQAAHE has member agencies all over the world and some form of external quality evaluation or monitoring occurs in at least 100 countries. There is a growing professionalisation of external quality assurance. This is not matched, in many countries by the development of robust and effective internal quality procedures. Indeed, there is, in countries such as Germany, a considerable disjunction between external quality assurance and the relatively unsophisticated and ineffective internal quality assurance processes.

Academic staff in many institutions continue to be sceptical of quality systems, both external and internal. This raises issues about the efficacy of systems that generate reports but do not engage with the heart of the academic endeavour (Newton, 2000; Stensaker 2003; Vidal, 2003).

This paper addresses the issue of internal quality assurance through an analysis of the increasingly accepted panacea for the shortcomings of internal quality assurance: the development of a quality culture (Bastová *et al.*, 2004; Rozsnyai, 2003). There has been a recent surge of interest in quality culture, not least prompted by initiatives from the European Universities Association. However, despite the analysis by Hoffman (2005), which emphasised trust and a shift from teaching to learning, there are diverse notions of what constitutes a quality culture in practice. The paper will start by analysing quality culture (drawing on Harvey and Stensaker, 2008) and its relationship to internal quality procedures.

Internal systems and quality culture

This analysis attempts to provide the basis for a critique that differentiates quality culture as the latest buzzword, adopted unreflectively within institutions, from quality culture as

an organising principle, indeed, a way of life, that empowers all stakeholders within higher education. Quality culture is a poorly understood concept, despite the recent upsurge in prominence, and is often implicitly construed as embodying a system of internal quality monitoring. This paper argues that having an internal quality system is not the same as having a quality culture.

An internal quality system is a bureaucratic, mechanistic device with a set of procedures, manuals, guidelines and imposed requirements. At worst, these are controlling or require compliance. At best they invoke accountability in an attempt to encourage improvement.

The shape of the internal system is contingent on the purposes it fulfils. Overwhelmingly, while the rhetoric is improvement, systems are usually rule-bound and insufficiently flexible to do more than pay lip-service to improvement. They are usually regarded by those who have to comply with them as no more part of what they do than the external quality processes: in short internal quality monitoring for most academics are viewed as alien, as internal-external requirements that demand compliance rather more than encourage engagement.

Why is this? Because most internal processes do not exhibit the characteristics of a culture, rather they reflect the rules and expectations of an audit culture. They are fundamentally distrustful and responses are constrained by an externally-imposed framework of thinking embodied in backward-looking forms and templates to be completed.

What are the characteristics of culture?

Culture ‘is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language’ (Williams, 1983, p. 87). The word derives from the Latin *colere*, which had several meanings, including cultivate, protect, inhabit and honour with worship. Some of these remain in derived words (such as cult) but as the Latin noun *cultura* evolved its main meaning was cultivation and as it passed into English early in 15th century it came also to include cultivation of the mind. This led to a more abstract concept and the linking of culture to civilisation and the élitist notion of ‘cultured’. However, in Germany the concept was being ‘democratised’ and the idea of multiple (and equally valid) cultures emerged.

Culture, in the sense of a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artefacts, developed along three lines. First, culture is used as an abstract noun implying civilised. Second, culture implies artistic culture, which was initially ‘high’ culture but has also developed to mean any form of artistic endeavour, including the subset of ‘popular culture’. This artistic construction, at its broadest, refers to all aspects of human achievement that are recorded in some kind of documentary form, including, painting, sculpture, literature, film, photographs and video. Third, is the notion of diverse cultures (including subcultures), which linked culture firmly with a way of life. Harvey and Stensaker (2008) draw on Williams and others and outline the evolution of the concept and relate it to the idea of a notion of quality culture.

Nine aspects of culture are highlighted as a result of the historical analysis. First, culture is not a homogeneous concept, much less confined to the élitist idea of ‘cultured’. Second, nonetheless, culture does retain a creative core; there is a sense that it is about

creative endeavours and ‘culture’ implies ‘creativity’. Third, there is an implicit view of a distinction between those who produce culture and those who consume it (author and reader, for example) but that this distinction has been challenged by the notion of the reader having an active creative role: in effect, the dialectical synthesis of the ‘producer’ and the ‘reader’, which is important in thinking about the way quality cultures are developed. Fourth, culture, in its democratic form, is about a learned way of life, a context for knowledge production. Culture is not a set of external control mechanisms, it is distinct from, although not unrelated to, the body of rules and laws. Fifth, culture does not just reflect the material world but also has symbolic elements. Sixth, culture and ideology are interrelated, which tends to be overlooked in analyses of ‘quality culture’. Seventh, there is, arguably, a dialectical relationship between culture and economy, not a deterministic one; that is, culture does not just reflect economic priorities but may also inform economic concerns. Eighth, culture may be construed either as transcending the human actors, as something external, or as possessed uniquely by people: culture is part of the people who make up the culture. Ninth, cultures can be sites of resistance, as in subcultures; this is a documented effect of the quality movement in higher education (Newton, 2000).

Complexity of quality culture

Harvey and Stensaker argued that taking the concept of quality culture seriously requires acknowledging this complexity. In effect it means focusing on the concept of ‘culture’ rather than the on mechanism for developing ‘quality’ procedures (that is, quality as *quality assurance* procedures).

In many discussions, the complexity of quality culture is effectively ignored because it is a concept being used as a manipulative tool, seeing it as an end product, preferably codified as a set of procedures to ensure ‘accountability’ or to encourage improvement. In essence, this approach to quality culture is alien, imposed and, probably unwelcome as it is related to various functions raised by external and internal-external stakeholders in higher education. This is a long way from the notion of culture as a way of life.

Indeed the separation of accountability and improvement is artificial (Harvey and Newton, 2007). The debate about accountability and improvement has persisted throughout the last twenty years of the ‘quality revolution’ and was well documented in the early 1990s (Vroeijenstijn and Acherman, 1990; Frederiks *et al.*, 1994; Vroeijenstijn, 1995; Middlehurst and Woodhouse, 1995). Quality assurance, it is argued, is between a rock and a hard place: torn between improvement and accountability. However, if accountability is fundamentally about ensuring compliance to financial and policy requirements and regulations, then the notion of a conflict between that and improvement is illusory.

Quality assurance processes may find that in practice they are unable to encourage improvement while demanding compliance but these are not two ends of a single continuum but two distinct and only partly-related dimensions. At the very least, we have a two-by-two grid of opportunities: compliance/non-compliance by improvement/non-improvement. Whether it is possible to have a set of quality assurance conditions that simultaneously encourage action in the upper left quadrant is a moot point: but an irrelevant one. Compliance has nothing to do with improvement. Compliance may or may not lead to improvement in certain features of higher education landscape, although being a holistic system it may result in deterioration elsewhere. Put in another

way, accountability is about value for money and demonstrating fitness for purpose, while continuous improvement in teaching and learning is about improvement of the student experience, and empowering students as life-long learners (Harvey and Newton, 2007, p. 232)

It is absurd to think that developing critical reflective learners should be constrained by accountability procedures that purport to be about quality. Harvey and Newton (2007) argued that improvement does not occur as the result of regulation but occurs through critical engagement. Accountability and improvement are not two related dimensions of quality; on the contrary they are distinct. Quality assurance has created an illusory tension by pretending that intrinsic quality is linked to the process of monitoring quality.

Developing a quality culture

Returning to the nine caveats, Harvey and Stensaker (2008) suggested that they raise significant issues for the development of a quality culture, especially if the radical step of dissolving the artificial accountability-improvement dichotomy is taken and the focus is placed on learning.

First, there is often an implicit cultural imperialism associated with quality culture. This ranges from the presumption that quality culture (especially in the form of a set of procedures) is necessary, through to an assumption that best practice is transferable from one context to another: usually, in higher education, from north-west European or North American practices to the rest of the world. In short, a quality culture cannot be imposed and there is a need to be critical about standardised preconceptions of what it should look like.

Thus, second, one should be careful in seeing quality culture as pre-defined. On the contrary, it should be creatively developed and integrated with everyday practices.

Third, quality culture is not mechanistic or codified, a system produced by specialists for adoption by others. It is an iterative, indeed dialectical, process of evolution that does not just focus on internal processes but relates them to a wider appreciation of social and political forces and locates them historically. Quality culture is not a panacea, something that can be disengaged from a wider lived reality.

Fourth, the dialectical evolution is compatible with a democratic notion of quality culture as a lived, learned experience that itself generates knowledge; rather than simply processes it.

Fifth, a quality culture is not just about checking outputs at each stage but is also a frame of mind. It is important to critically engage with the ‘way of seeing’.

However, sixth, this is not just a matter of raising consciousness but a fundamental question of ideology. A quality culture is an ideological construct, a fact that cannot be glossed by a set of prescriptions or recipes for implementation. A quality culture is not a tool but a socio-political construct.

Seventh, a quality culture is not likely to be constructed irrespective of the context in which it is located, which not only limits the possibilities for system transfer but demands a critical deconstruction of the purpose and underlying ideology behind the quality assurance requirements. Indeed, to the point, that the critical analysis may fundamentally critique the need for assurance processes at all.

Eighth, a quality culture is nothing if it is not owned by the people who live it. This raises the ninth caveat of resistance to and engagement with quality cultures. An effective quality culture is ideologically compatible with the lived experience; the culture merges with the ideological preconceptions of the protagonists and is rendered invisible. This is a long way from a quality culture that provokes resistance because there is an ideological friction between the imposers of a ‘culture of quality’ and the recipients who do not live the quality culture but see it as a managerialist fad, as a mechanism designed to undermine their autonomy and academic freedom, or otherwise be perceived as disempowering.

As a pragmatic illustration of quality culture, Harvey and Stensaker produced an indicative Weberian ideal typification of ‘quality cultures’ in practice. They chose two dimensions against which to construct a simple dichotomy. This was not intended as a definitive answer but as an illustration of the complexity of quality culture construction. They drew on Douglas (1982) and Thompson *et al.* (1990), who suggested that understanding an individual’s involvement in social life depends on whether or not the individual’s behaviour is group-controlled and whether or not it is pre-scribed by external rules and regulations. The resulting two-by-two grid identified four ideal-type cells, which they labelled responsive, reactive, regenerative and reproductive. Although this dichotomisation is crude and reliance on two dimensions is contentious, the descriptions (Appendix 1) indicate the variability in quality culture. What is notable is how remote some of these ‘cultures’ are from every day practice, which, according to this analysis, is a contradiction in terms.

Transformative learning and quality culture

What this analysis raises is the need to think of quality culture not as a set of procedures but as context in which efforts are linked to the development of transformative learning. At the risk of introducing another recent buzzword that is also in danger of becoming meaningless through sloppy usage, transformation is at the heart of quality (Harvey 2006), is uncontaminated by the illusion of an accountability-improvement dichotomy and is compatible with culture as a lived experience.

Transformative learning is rather more than the notion of student-centred pedagogy, although this is a facet of transformative learning. Harvey and Knight (1996) drew together threads from their respective earlier work in setting out an explanation of transformative learning. They maintained that transformative learning is based around the notion of qualitative change, which also links to the notion of quality as a transformative process (rather than a stable state to be judged against predefined standards or desires or mission statements).

They argued that transformation is about a fundamental change of *form*. Ice is transformed into water and eventually steam if it experiences an increase in temperature. While the increase in temperature can be measured, the transformation involves a qualitative change. Ice has different qualities from those of steam or water. It is made up of the same molecules but reacts very differently with its environment. Furthermore, transformation is not restricted to apparent or physical transformation but also includes cognitive transcendence. This transformative notion of quality is well established in Western philosophy and can be found in the discussion of dialectical transformation in

the works of Aristotle, Kant, Hegel and Marx as well as in the more essentialist transcendental philosophies, ranging from Husserlian phenomenology through Buddhism and Jainism.

Education is a participative process in which students are participants not consumers or product. Education is not a service *for* a customer (much less a product to be consumed) but an ongoing process of transformation *of* the participant. Transformative education both enhances the knowledge and skills of the participant but also empowers participants.

In the mid-1990s, the notion of ‘empowering students’ had become prominent but the next decade saw a retreat, citing lack of clarity and ‘trendy buzzwords’, when the political implications became clear. Instead, the emphasis shifted to the rather less threatening ‘student-centred learning’. Harvey and Knight (1996) argued, and the position is more apposite than ever over a decade on, that empowering students involves giving power to participants to influence their own transformation and encouraging them to take ownership of the learning process. Furthermore, the transformation process itself provides the opportunity for self-empowerment, through increased confidence and self-awareness. At the core of student empowerment is the development of a critical attitude; to think and act in a way that transcends taken-for-granted preconceptions, prejudices and frames of reference, questioning established orthodoxy and learning to justify opinions. Transformative learning, in this sense, encourages students to think about knowledge as a process in which *they* are engaged, not some ‘thing’ they tentatively approach and selectively appropriate.

In short, an approach that encourages critical ability treats students as *intellectual performers* rather than as compliant audience. It transforms teaching and learning into an active process of coming to understand. It enables students to easily go beyond the narrow confines of the ‘safe’ knowledge base of their academic discipline to applying themselves to whatever they encounter in the post-education world.... [It] attempts to empower students not just as ‘customers’ in the education process but for life.

Critical transformation is an active process of coming to understand. Critical transformative action involves getting to the heart of an issue while simultaneously setting it in its wider context. It is a matter of conceptually shuttling backwards and forwards between what the learner already knows and what the learner is finding out, between the specific detail and its broader significance, and between practice and reflection. Transformative learning involves a process of deconstruction and reconstruction. Deconstruction gets beneath surface appearances; be they traditional modes of working, taken-for-granted attitudes, embedded values, prevailing myths, ideology or ‘well-known’ facts. It uses a core or essential concept to ‘lever open’ the area of investigation. Harvey and Knight (1996) used the example of housework (derived from Delphy (1984)) to illustrate the process drawing on in Harvey’s (1990) earlier *Critical Social Research*.

What is housework? Who does it? And should it be a paid activity? If so, by whom?

The taken-for-granted approach sees housework as a set of tasks done in the home for no pay. Traditionally, in many societies, it is women’s work because they were the homekeepers. But there is an inconsistency here, because the same set of tasks done in someone else’s home is paid work. And if we take the case, for example, of farm work done in a domestic setting, some of it is

economically accountable as it adds value (such as butchering some livestock), yet cooking it for the family to eat is non-accountable, free domestic labour.

A more useful way to view housework, which addresses these anomalies, is to deconstruct it as a relation of production. It is not a set of tasks, and to attempt to analyze the notion of housework in those terms will answer no fundamental questions. Housework is essentially a work *relationship*. Housework is unremunerated work done by one family member *for* another. To discuss it as a set of tasks reflects a patriarchal ideology that conceals the actual nature of the exploitative relationship. To see it as a work relationship provides a meaningful context for questions about paying for housework. It also sets housework in a broader sphere, takes it out of the ‘merely’ domestic as it questions the interrelationship between domestic exploitation and the wider economic system. To see domestic labour as a set of tasks does not even begin to address such questions. (Harvey and Knight, 1996, p. 20)

Critical transformative learning is thus deconstructive. It is also reconstructive. It is not just a matter of taking things apart. Once the concept has been deconstructed an alternative conceptualisation needs to be built to enable sense to be made of experience. ‘To deconstruct the task-set notion of housework is one thing, but unless an alternative is proposed, such as housework is a work relationship, the learner has become trapped by criticism in a cage of someone else’s making’ (Harvey and Knight, 1996, p. 20).

However, critical transformation is continuous and having reconstructed an alternative conceptualisation this, itself, becomes the subject of further critical transformative learning. So, transformation is not just about adding to a student’s stock of knowledge or set of skills and abilities. At its core, transformation, in an educational sense, refers to the evolution of the way students approach the acquisition of knowledge and skills and relate them to a wider context.

The idea of transformative learning has also been developed by Mezirow (2000), taking a cue from critical theory’s analysis of consciousness. He developed this in his concept of ‘perspective transformation’, which is about becoming critically aware that assumptions about the world constrain the way the world is perceived and understood. Perspective transformation is about challenging taken-for-granted, developing new understandings and acting upon these new understandings. Astin (1985) had developed much the same kind of analysis, albeit from somewhat different roots. Mezirow’s approach is compatible with a constructivist view. He argues that meaning structures may change as an individual adds to or integrates ideas within an existing scheme; such a transformation of meaning occurs routinely through learning. However, perspective transformation leading to transformative learning, where a fundamental reconceptualisation takes place, occurs much less frequently. Mezirow suggested that transformative learning usually results from a disorienting dilemma, triggered by a life crisis or major life transition, although it may also result from an accumulation of meaning transformations (Mezirow, 1995, p. 50).

This focus on paradigm-shift like changes is where Mezirow differs from the concept of transformative learning developed by Harvey and Knight (1996). For them, transformative learning is about enabling a continuous dialectical process of engaging: of a critical attitude versus assimilation and momentous periodic change. The momentous occasion in the Harvey and Knight approach is the initial grasping of the critical dialectical approach, thereafter, transformative learning is continuous through ongoing critique. This is similar to O’Sullivan’s (2003) view of transformative learning, which asserts that transformative learning involves experiencing:

a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body awarenesses, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy.

If the deep structural shift is the shift to a critical attitude it more or less matches the Harvey and Knight approach. If, however, and the definition is ambiguous, the structural shift is recurring and occasional, then it is closer to the Mezirow-style paradigm shift.

Another difference between Harvey and Knight and Mezirow, is the emphasis on deconstruction and rationalism in Mezirow and deconstruction and reconstruction of alternative understanding in Harvey and Knight. Mezirow's meaning schemes are based upon experiences that can be deconstructed and acted upon in a rational way. Mezirow (1995) suggests this happens through a series of phases that begin with the disorienting dilemma. Other phases include self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, recognition that others have shared similar transformations, exploration of new roles or actions, development of a plan for action, acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing the plan, tryout of the plan, development of competence and self-confidence in new roles, and reintegration into life on the basis of new perspectives. In this he appears to take on elements of Schultz's non-transcendental phenomenological project. Thus, transformative learning occurs when individuals change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds. This starts to converge back towards the critical dialectical perspective developed by Harvey and Knight (1996).

Mezirow thus places emphasis on transformative paradigm-shift-like moments, whereas the notion of transformative learning rehearsed in this article, places more emphasis on ongoing dialectical deconstruction and reconstruction. Mezirow also linked transformative learning to deconstruction but is relatively silent about the nature of reconstructive processes. He is rather more concerned with rationalisation, taking his cue from Habermas. He proposed that:

A key proposition of transformative learning theory recognizes the validity of Habermas's (1984) fundamental distinction between instrumental and communicative learning. Instrumental learning is about controlling and manipulating the environment, with emphasis on improving prediction and performance. Instrumental learning centrally involves assessing truth claims—that something is as it is purported to be. Communicative learning refers to understanding what someone means when they communicate with you.... The process of understanding [communication] involves assessing claims to rightness, sincerity, authenticity, and appropriateness rather than assessing a truth claim. The process of critical-dialectical discourse centrally involves assessing the beliefs of others to arrive at a tentative best judgment.

Thus, for Mezirow, the distinction between instrumental and communicative learning is fundamental. He proposes that hypothetical-deductive logic and empirical methods are more often appropriate for instrumental learning, while for communicative learning, the developmental logic involves analogic-abductive inference and qualitative research methods are often more appropriate. He states that abductive reasoning is reasoning from concrete instances to an abstract conceptualization, which is the reverse of Marx's dialectical analysis from abstract to concrete, with its necessary shuttling back

and forth between past and present, incident and structure, instance and theory. Transformative learning as proposed in this paper is, as demonstrated above, coincident with a broader approach to critical social research than critical theory; one that draws on Marx's analysis of dialectical deconstruction and reconstruction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, one could simply reassert the key point that quality culture is not a process or set of procedures, much less one that can be imported and imposed.

The question remains, is there a way to encourage the development of a 'quality culture'. If the spirit of the analysis is retained, then there are two key issues in encouraging a quality culture. First, entirely disengage the development of a quality culture from sets of *assurance* procedures. Second, developing a quality culture is synonymous with developing a self-critical and reflective community of practitioners. This does not occur by imposing compliance requirements (except in the perverse way of uniting the community against the requirements).

Nor is it possible to provide a simple checklist of actions necessary to develop a quality culture. Prescriptive lists of actions provide, at best, guides to establishing an appropriate context but they do not address the fundamental socio-political and professional-cultural issues. These issues are intrinsically linked to the specific context and the nature of learning and associated pedagogy; which are ideological constructs. A transformative learning approach, as explored above, demands a critical dialectical approach on the part of the teacher as much as the inculcation of that in the student. It also requires a reconceptualisation of the pedagogic process and an ideological critique of the purpose of learning and, contingent on that, of the evaluation of quality. A quality culture embodies professional reflection as a learning community: a community that includes all the participants. It is intrinsic to a way of life, a way of thinking and a way of coming to understand. A quality culture is not something that can be codified in a manual!

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Appendix

Ideal type ‘Quality Culture’

<i>Degree of group-control</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>
<i>Intensity of external rules</i>		
Strong	Responsive	Reactive
Weak	Regenerative	Reproductive

Responsive Quality Culture

as an ideal-type is primarily led by external demands, be they governmental imperatives, such as widening access, or agency expectations of compliance, such as delivering a self-assessment document. The responsive mode is positive in taking the opportunities offered (or forced on) the institution and using them to review practices, create forward-looking agendas, explore how to maximise benefit from engagement with policies or requirements and to engineer improvement. The responsive mode will thus have an improvement agenda for quality assurance, although it will be acutely aware of accountability issues and compliance requirements. It is likely that the responsive mode will attempt to learn from culturally similar good practice, adopt it and (hopefully) modify it, but essentially see the culture as something created to deal with the evaluation problem, a solution to an issue created by others. This is likely to be exacerbated internally by a lack of buy-in to a quality culture as a way of life and lack of feeling of ownership or of any real control. Rather, quality culture will appear as existing beyond their control as something, perhaps, that the institution encourages its staff to embrace but which is unconnected with everyday experience, a parallel reality that staff journey to periodically.

Reactive quality culture

as an ideal-type reacts to, rather than engages with external demands. The reactive mode may take advantage when action is linked to reward, such as research evaluations linked to funding, but is likely to be reluctant to embrace most forms of quality evaluation, having reservations about the potential outcomes. The reactive mode will have doubts about any improvement potential resulting from evaluation, will tend to be driven by compliance and, reluctantly, accountability; although mourning the loss of trust (and autonomy). The reactive mode will tend to deal with one thing at a time, with a rather disjointed or dislocated cultural ethos that may well reinvent wheels. The quality culture is likely to be construed as externally constructed, managed and imposed, with little or no sense of ownership. It is more likely to be something delegated to a specific space (a quality office). The reactive mode may, for example, harbour counter cultures among academics that perceives any kind of quality culture as a beast to be fed (Newton, 2000).

Regenerative quality culture

as an ideal-type is focused on internal developments, albeit fully aware of the external context and expectations. The regenerative mode, although taking the opportunities afforded via review exercises and making the most of government initiatives, is one that

has a coordinated plan for its own internal regeneration which has primacy and external opportunities are included where they add value, otherwise they are accommodated at the margins or even actively subverted. A regenerative quality culture tends to be widespread, with clear overall goals, in a state of flux as activities and events evolve. Its dynamism is manifest not just in an improvement agenda but in an ongoing reconceptualisation of what it knows, where it is going and even the language in which it frames its future direction. The improvement process will be a taken-for-granted norm and the regenerative mode will assume that its continual improvement programme is itself a form of accountability. The regenerative mode will likely encompass a learning-organisation approach, seeking out learning opportunities, benchmarking possibilities and generating space for reflective review. The quality culture will be indistinguishable from everyday work practice and while it leads to regeneration it will be unquestioned. Ideologically, the quality culture will be attuned with the aspirations of the team. However, if regeneration stalls or is interfered with externally, be it by a higher layer of management or by an external force, the quality culture will have an intrinsic subversive potential.

Reproductive quality culture

as an ideal-type is focused on reproducing the *status quo*, manipulating the situation to minimise the impact of external factors as far as possible. The reproductive mode is focused on what the institution or its sub units do best and for what it is rewarded and its plans go little beyond reproducing them. A widespread, internalised quality but with clear boundaries, it has established norms and is unlikely to reconceptualise core concepts or future goals. The quality culture, although indistinguishable from everyday work practice, is not transparent and is encoded in various taken-for-granted or esoteric practices. Nonetheless a sense of a job well done is maintained and perpetuated through the culture. Ideologically, the quality culture reflects the expertise and individual aspirations of members. Any attempt to develop a more open, self-critical approach is likely to result in an implacable resistance culture.