

***The quality panopticon in higher education:
A comparative analysis of France & England***

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Declaration

I, Juliette Torabian, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

I also confirm that the number of words in this thesis do not exceed 45,000.

Juliette Torabian

Abstract

This qualitative research study compares the local construction of 'quality' through national and institutional discourses and practices in France and England. It examines their impact on the daily practice of academics in the cases of Sciences Po Paris and London School of Economics. The study adopts a social constructivist epistemology, a multiple case study design, and uses a Foucauldian discourse analysis to interpret the data. The data is gathered through an analysis of policies, quality codes, and audit reports, as well as twenty qualitative semi-structured interviews with officials in quality agencies, institutional managers, and academics.

Many analyses of quality assurance systems in higher education have likened them to Foucault's metaphorical 'panopticon'; the conceptual framework of this study initially uses the concept of panopticon and modifies it by integrating Clark's (1983) triangle of coordination and Ball's (1994) policy cycle. The findings reveal that the State plays an important steering role: in France through project-based funding and in England by setting and updating quality norms. In England, a focus on students' satisfaction (which in reality is a manufactured concern) has led to discourses focussing on 'value for money' and 'excellence' and has created a shared quality culture across Higher education institutions. This facilitates academics' practice, particularly for the newly recruited contractual lecturers. In France, quality is taken as a static condition associated with the prestige and selective admission processes of the grandes écoles. This, in addition to the binary divide between universities and the grandes écoles and longstanding bureaucratic rigidities, has inhibited the creation and implementation of a shared quality culture. This has an especially negative impact on contractual teachers' practice while permanent academics are hired and perform based on national frameworks.

This research is of significance as it, a) examines quality policies and practices in France which is an understudied topic; b) provides a comparative analysis of socio-historical events and State policies as well as elite institutions' practices that have shaped the local definition of quality in higher education in England and France; c) critiques Foucault's panopticon in light of the current developments in higher education quality governance, its multiple interest groups, and their power relations; and, d) argues that quality systems may have an empowering impacts on academics.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	7
Reflective Statement	9
List of Abbreviations	11
List of Figures	13
List of Tables	13
List of Appendices	13
Chapter 1: Introduction	14
1.1. Setting the Scene	15
1.2. Context of the study	17
1.2.1. France	17
1.2.2. England	20
1.3. Rationale	23
1.3.1. Significance of the study	23
1.3.2. Professional/Academic motivation	25
1.4. Ethical concerns	26
1.5. Impact of the study	27
1.6. Delimitations of the study	27
1.7. Outline of the study	27
Chapter 2: Literature Review	28
2.1. Introduction	29
2.2. Key terms	30
2.3. Quality assurance in higher education: the origins of a modern panopticon	33
2.3.1. The international context	33
2.3.2. The European political agenda: attractivity in a competing market	36
2.4. Understanding French higher education: the history and the politics of the State	38
2.4.1. A fragmented and centralised bureaucracy: a higher education for the political elite	38
2.4.2. Towards an evaluative State: post-1968 to 2012	41
2.4.3. Cosmetic changes: recent developments under the Socialist Party (2012-2017)	46
2.5. Understanding English higher education and its risk management	48
2.5.1. From the medieval era to pre-1992: the development of a binary system	49
2.5.2. The post-1992 era: the beginnings of quality enhancement	54

2.5.3. Recent developments under the coalition government: the shift towards risk management	56
2.6. Conclusion	58
Chapter 3: Methodology & Methods	60
3.1. Introduction	61
3.2. Methodology	61
3.3. Design	65
3.4. Methods of data collection	66
3.4.1. Primary sources of data collection	66
3.4.1.1. Primary documents: individual interviews	67
3.4.1.2. Primary documents: national and institutional	68
3.4.2. Secondary sources	70
3.5. Data collection	71
3.6. The participants	71
3.7. The process	72
3.8. Data Analysis	75
3.8.1. A Foucauldian analysis of data	75
Chapter 4: Conceptual framework	78
4.1. Introduction	79
4.2. Panopticon: Foucault's portrayal of power	79
4.3. The conceptual framework: the quality panopticon and its integral parts	81
4.4. The norm-setting processes: How they operate	81
4.5. The actors in the panopticon: whose interest? whose power?	83
Chapter 5: Findings and data analyses	89
5.1. Introduction	90
5.2. RQ1. How is quality in higher education defined and constructed in the cases of England and France?	90
5.2.1. 'L'excellence à la française': the actors and ideas defining quality	91
5.2.2. The phantom of the Opera: the Grandes Ecoles	91
5.2.3. Beware! In the language of Molière, it is called 'evaluation' not 'quality'	95
5.2.4. Universities! You can run, but you can't hide.	100
5.2.5. The English excellence and discipline: anticipating and avoiding the plague	104
5.2.6. Kaizen 'à l'anglaise' and quality life cycles	107
5.2.7. From a trustworthy to a risky business	111
5.3. RQ2. What quality management mechanisms are in place in the two-selected elite higher education institutions in England and France?	116

5.3.1.	The case of Sciences Po Paris	117
5.3.1.1.	Caught between two worlds	117
5.3.1.2.	Quality among our local elite means selection, meritocracy, and employability	119
5.3.1.3.	The threats and the opportunities of internationalisation	124
5.3.2.	The case of the LSE	126
5.3.2.1.	The embodiment of the QAA orthodoxies	126
5.3.2.2.	More catholic than the Pope: our history, our processes	127
5.3.2.3.	Students at the heart of the system and the staff too	131
5.4.	RQ3. How do academics perceive and enact quality in their professional practice in England and France?	135
5.4.1.	Sciences Po Paris: senior academics' perceptions of quality	136
5.4.2.	Sciences Po Paris: junior contractual academics' perceptions of quality	141
5.4.3.	The LSE: senior academics' perceptions of quality	145
5.4.4.	The LSE: junior academics' perceptions of quality	148
Chapter 6: Reflections and further research		151
6.1.	Reflections	152
6.2.	Further research	159
References		160
Appendices		178
	Appendix 1 Sciences Po institutions around France	179
	Appendix 2 AERES evaluation waves in France	180
	Appendix 3 AERES evaluation cycles	182
	Appendix 4 The Interview Schedule	183
	Appendix 5 A sample extract from an interview: The case of England	184
	Appendix 6 A sample extract from an interview: The case of France	185
	Appendix 7 Invitation email to interviewees (English version)	187
	Appendix 8 Invitation email to interviewees (French version)	188

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Reflective Statement

I started my EdD journey in 2009. The first two years of taught modules were quite a fulfilling experience. I had a unique opportunity to work with renowned academics and researchers and acquire specialised knowledge in education as a discipline and to further trim and tweak my academic writing. During this period, I had enriching exchanges with fellow practitioners who attended the programme from around the world with whom I could perhaps never meet and learn from in my own line of professional activity.

The idea for my IFS study, in fact, came from discussions with my fellow classmates. I realised that despite our age and cultural differences, we shared some common anxieties and coping strategies as adult distance learners. I found this was a relevant theme to the research I have conducted as part of the EdD taught modules and could help education practitioners with an insight into this group of learners whose experiences and needs have not been as popular a subject as those of younger international learners. Therefore, my IFS study focused on “Students’ experiences in an international EdD programme in the UK: An interpretive approach”. The IFS stage was a milestone in my EdD journey. It helped broadening my knowledge in sociology of education, educational research methods and methodologies, and comparative analysis.

Following the IFS stage and in consultation with my supervisors, I decided to concentrate my thesis study on the topics that most interested me and on which I had already built a research profile, i.e., comparative higher education and quality mechanisms. Besides, my professional activities as an international education advisor and programme manager have mostly concentrated on ‘quality of education’. It had helped me develop a practical understanding of sociology of education and the role of different actors in defining and enacting ‘quality’ in different regions of the world. I intended to draw on my professional experience and academic knowledge to compare quality discourses and practices in higher education systems in France and England.

To gain a better insight into French higher education system, I did the following: I participated in a Doctoral ERASMUS exchange programme in Université Rene Descartes (Paris 5). During this one-year programme I took note of the ways universities operated, the kind of service they provided, and also gained disciplinary knowledge in history of education and gender equality-comparative analysis of France and a few other European and African countries. I also took a gap year from EdD to study for my second Masters’ degree at the elite grande école in Social and Political Sciences: Sciences Po Paris (PSIA). There too, I observed the ways the School and its programmes were managed, the kind of services that were provided for students and academics, and updated my professional knowledge in development studies, human rights, programme management, and environment.

In the year that followed I started drafting my thesis proposal while lecturing at Sciences Po Paris and working as a part-time teacher at British Council Paris. The review panel meeting was held online and I was upgraded. I received constructive feedback from the panel members and my supervisors based on which I continued revising the proposal.

Once this stage was completed, I started reviewing the literature, preparing and conducting interviews, drafting and revising chapters of my thesis. This was a difficult task as I had to manage time and effort between personal, professional, and academic priorities. The constructive advice of my supervisors and the support of my family helped me complete this stage and enter for examination.

The EdD International programme at the IOE has been a worthwhile journey for me. I have acquired first hand specialised knowledge in the field of education. It has helped me in successfully building a research profile through publications and has also helped me develop a specialised understanding of quantitative and qualitative research methods, practices and policies in higher education, quality and sociology of education, and international comparative research. This has been a worthwhile journey as I have developed a sharper analytical understanding of education as a field of study and practice and has engaged in reflective practice. But most important of all, the EdD programme has helped me in being a better practitioner as I've learnt from my supervisors' integrity, professionalism and academic honesty. I am hoping to continue with my research and academic endeavours and be able to transfer what I have learnt at the IOE and combine it with my professional field knowledge to train and mentor a younger generation of education practitioners. I believe, the EdD programme has provided me with a solid basis on which I can build a future career in academia that I have always aspired to from a very young age.

List of Abbreviations

AAI	Autorité Administrative Indépendante
AERES	Agence d'Evaluation de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur
ANR	Agence Nationale de la Recherche
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
CETL	Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
CGE	Conférence des Grandes Ecoles
CNAA	Council for National Academic Awards
CNE	Comité National d'Evaluation
CNER	Comité National de l'Evaluation de Recherche
CNRS	Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
CVCP	Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals
DES	Department for Education and Skills
EdD	Doctorate in Education
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EHESS	École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociale
ELSP	Fondation de l'École Libre de Sciences Politiques
ENA	École Nationale d'Administration
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EPA	Etablissement Public à Caractère Administratif
EPSCP	Établissement Public à Caractère Scientifique, Culturel et Professionnel
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
ESR	Enseignement Supérieur et Recherche
ESIB	National Unions of Students in Europe
ESR	Enseignement Supérieur et Recherche
EQM	External Quality Monitoring
EUA	European University Association
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQA	External Quality Assurance
FDA	Foucauldian Discourse Analysis
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
Hcéres	Haut Conseil de l'Évaluation de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur
HEC	Hautes Etudes Commerciales de Paris
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEPI	Higher Education Policy Institute
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Council
IEP	Institut d'Etudes Politiques
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
IOE	Institute of Education
ISS	Interpretive Social Science
LMD	License, Master, Doctorat

LOLF	Loi Organique Relative aux Lois de Finance
LRU	Loi Relative aux Libertés et Responsabilités des Universités
LES	London School of Economics and Political Studies
MSTP	Mission Scientifique, Technique et Pédagogique
NPM	New Public Management
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCFC	Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council
PRES	Pôle de Recherche et d'Enseignement Supérieur
PS	Parti Socialiste
PSIA	Paris School of International Affairs
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QE	Quality Enhancement
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
REF	Research Excellence Framework
ScPo	Sciences Po
TLC	Teaching Learning centre
TPS	Toyota Production System
TQA	Teaching Quality Assurance
TQM	Total Quality Management
TLC	Teaching and Learning Centre
UGC	University Grant Council
UFC	University Funding Council
UMP	Union for a popular movement
UK	United Kingdom
UUK	Universities UK
US	United States of America

List of Figures

- Figure 1. Summary of elements triggering a shift towards quasi-market universities
- Figure 2. Tilt-a-whirl
- Figure 3. Jeremy Bentham: A general idea of penitentiary panopticon, 1787
- Figure 4. An inside view of the panopticon
- Figure 5. Stephen Ball's 1992 Policy Cycle
- Figure 6. Modifications to Ball's 1992 Policy Cycle
- Figure 7. Clark's triangle of coordination
- Figure 8. The conceptual framework of the study
- Figure 9. Clark's triangle of coordination
- Figure 10. Modifications to Clark's triangle of coordination

List of Tables

- Table 1. Key fact: Sciences Po Paris
- Table 2. Key facts: The LSE
- Table 3. Selected national documents for analysis: the case of France
- Table 4. Selected national documents for analysis: the case of England
- Table 5. List of institutional documents

List of Appendices

- Appendix 1. Sciences Po institutions around France
- Appendix 2. AERES evaluation waves in France
- Appendix 3. AERES evaluation cycles
- Appendix 4. The Interview Schedule
- Appendix 5. A sample extract from an interview: The case of England
- Appendix 6. A sample extract from an interview: The case of France
- Appendix 7. Invitation email to interviewees (English version)
- Appendix 8. Invitation email to interviewees (French version)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Setting the Scene

Over the last two decades and following the Bologna Process, 'quality' has become the central 'metanarrative' of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Quality systems and standards have turned into a prism through which all aspects of academic life are examined. As a dominant discursive orthodoxy, quality norms have eclipsed former values and power relations within academia re-defining 'how we construct and interpret higher education' (Hoecht, 2006). They now offer market proper images of transparency, accountability, and excellence that construct 'the truth' and 'produce the objects and rituals of truth' (Foucault, 1977) in higher education.

Quality discourses are believed to normalise a new regime of truth and power in which constant registration and observation frenzy is exercised to fabricate the behaviours, identities, and social relations of those working in universities, especially the academics. The pervasiveness of compliance and subversion in academics as they deal with quality systems has been discussed in several studies, e.g., (Morley, 2003; Shore & Roberts, 1993; Hoecht, 2006; Polster, 2007; Teelkan & Lomas, 2009; Donovan, 2016). It seems that the inherent assumptions of strong control and authority in Foucault's (1975) panopticon have guided these and many other studies that consider quality mechanisms as one-way power relations with no benefit for academics who comply and 'play the game'. In Foucault's (1975) panopticon, inmates assume they are under constant visibility and surveillance and thus internalise the norms and police themselves facilitating an automatic functioning of power. This resembles the functions of quality norms that dismantle the traditional image of universities as cultural institutions and reconstruct it under the gaze of individual consumers and the aims of the 'disciplinary societies'.

But are these normative quality systems constructed similarly bearing the same impacts across European countries, universities, and their academics?

The short answer is No. Quality systems operate in different socio-political and historical settings and are inevitably subject to local reconstruction. Hence,

the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) proposed by the Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA) serves only as a frame of reference and not as a directive. The European quality frames do, of course, influence HEIs as they borrow policies and practices from one another. But local quality norms embody 'commonly shared values, social meanings, culture, and history' (Bogdan et al., 2012) that are articulated through higher education Acts, Reports, White Papers, and other forms of policy discourse.

This study aims to analyse such local conceptualisations of 'quality' at national and institutional levels and their impact on the daily practice of academics. To this end, I have selected the cases of France and England and two of their elite universities, the LSE in London and Sciences Po (ScPo) in Paris. The following questions are raised to explore quality as a norm-setting power system:

1. How is quality in higher education defined and constructed in the cases of England and France?

This will allow a comparative understanding of how different historical, cultural, and socio-political settings impact the construction and perceptions of 'quality' in the cases of England and France. It will also permit understanding the role of different actors in the definition and construction of quality as a system of power.

2. What quality management mechanisms are in place in the two-selected elite higher education institutions in England and France?

This will permit an understanding of internal quality mechanisms deployed and the extent to which they may be a reflection of the wider formal national approaches to 'quality'.

3. How do academics perceive and enact quality in their professional practice in these two institutional cases?

This will provide an insight into academics' perceptions of internal quality mechanisms against which they are examined at Sciences Po Paris and the LSE and will reveal the ways these bear an impact on their daily academic practice.

I understand that as Van Dijk (2000) stated 'quality' is a social discursive construction reflecting local worldviews. I also realise that quality is a fuzzy concept and is open to interpretations by different actors who may be inspired by its assurance, enhancement, or management to attain different ends. Therefore, quality may mean different things to different actors in a given time and context, including: *fitness for purpose, accountability, graduates' attributes, graduates' employability, or value for money.*

This study adopts a social constructivist epistemology, and a qualitative case study design. The methods of data collection include desk review of primary and secondary documents as well as twenty qualitative semi-structured interviews. The data is analysed and interpreted using a Foucauldian discourse analysis.

1.2. Context of the study

1.2.1. France

The chapter on literature review provides more details on French higher education and the policy discourses that construct its quality. At this stage, several points are of significance. Firstly, the French higher education has two distinct branches: a) public universities and research units legally called *Public establishments of scientific, cultural and professional character (EPCSP)*; and b) the elite higher education institutions called 'grandes écoles', legally called *Public establishments of administrative character (EPA)*. Secondly, the State provides public funding for both sectors. However, compared to other OECD countries (2016:195, table B1.2)¹, it is obvious that the French average funding per capita of 10,217 US\$ lags behind the expenditure of countries like the US (21,170) or England (15,825).

The third point is of direct relevance to the aims of this study and concerns

¹ Education at a glance: 2016 indicators
http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/education-at-a-glance-2016_eag-2016-en#.WS2H2riLTrc#_page195

quality. The first French quality agency (AERES) was created in 2007 by the famous LRU Act (Loi Relative aux Libertés et Responsabilités des Universités). Hence, it is only since 2007 that both universities and the grandes écoles are *de jure* subjects to reviews by a national quality agency. Between 2007-2014, AERES made an unwelcome attempt to instil quality mechanisms in teaching and research activities of HEIs as part of the wider governmental *autonomy* and *excellence plans*. On 17 November 2014 and under the socialist party, the AERES was replaced by the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (Hcéres) by the Law N°2013-660 of 22 July 2013. Hcéres has adopted a softer stance and has replaced the former disputed grading system of its predecessor with a culture of internal quality enhancement.

The French institutional case selected in this study is the leading French 'grande école' in social and political sciences: Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (IEP Paris- known as Sciences Po Paris). I mainly conducted the interviews during 2015 when I lectured international undergraduate students there. The Paris campus is one of the seven highly selective Sciences Po institutions around France (see appendix 1) hosting local and international undergraduate students, dual degree Master students, and PhD candidates.

Hereafter called (ScPo), the Paris school is in fact the only institution that bears the title of 'grande école' among other ScPo branches that were established from 2000 onwards. Originally called *École Libre des Sciences Politiques (ELSP)*, this elite public research and higher education institution was founded in 1872 by a group of intellectuals led by Emile Boutmy. The ELSP was a response to the French demise in international politics and sought to reform the education of French politicians outside the usual university trajectories and through a pragmatic and professional training. Its instructors were -and still are- from among the political and economic elite including ex-ministers, businessmen, and high-level civil servants- who shared their professional experiences with students.

The Institute underwent several reforms under Richard Descoings, the late Director of ScPo Paris (1997–2012): new campuses were inaugurated across France; the selective admission policies were revisited to allow entry to French

students from marginalised backgrounds- this initiative is called ZEP² (Priority Education Zones)- and international students; the number of scholarships and grants were increased; and flexible contractual recruitment of academics was made possible. Despite these developments, ScPo remains a representation of the French elitism and political power as will be discussed later. Table1 below provides an overview of the current situation at ScPo:

Table 1: SciencesPo: key facts Sources: Campus France 2015 ³ ; SciencesPo official website 2016 ⁴ ; AERES audit report 2014 ⁵ .	
Number of students	13,000
Number of campuses	7
Percentage of international students	46% from 150 countries
Percentage of students receiving scholarships	30%
International academic partnerships	9 universities
Number of double degree courses	15
Revenue (2013-2014) (153,5 M Euros)	State: 54,8% in 2013 (68.4 M) Private and EU: 45,2% in 2013 (84.9 M)
Alumni	55,000 (including French Presidents)
Graduate employment rate	80% within 6 months (39% working abroad)
Staff	4200 (200 permanent; 4000 lecturers on contracts)
QS world University ranking	2013-14: 214 ; 2014-15: 222 ; 2015-16: 223 ; 2016-17: 220 ; 2017-18: 220
QS ranking by subject (politics & Int'l Studies)	2013-14: 16 ; 2014-15: 13 ; 2015-16: 5 ; 2016-17: 4 ;

² Zone d'éducation prioritaire: these zones were proposed by Savary and created in 1981 to give schools in marginalised areas with more autonomy in providing tailored programmes.

³ http://ressources.campusfrance.org/guides_etab/etablissements/fr/univ_sciencespo_fr.pdf;

⁴ <http://www.sciencespo.fr/en/about/our-campuses>

⁵ www.aeres-evaluation.fr/.../343523/file/AERES-S1-SciencesPoParis.pdf

1.2.2. England

On the other side of the Manche, UK higher education has adopted aggressive marketing strategies prioritising internationalisation⁶ and quality assurance. Unlike France, all universities in England are legally independent corporate institutions and largely depend on funding from the research councils and students' fees. According to the OECD 2016 *Education in a Glance*⁷, in 2013 the UK allocated 1.1% and of its public and 0.8% of its private expenditure to tertiary education while the average OECD levels were 1.2% and 0.5%, respectively. Under the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act the previous polytechnics and universities have been unified and subjected to external scrutiny. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) was established in 1997 following the *Dearing report*⁸. The role of QAA is to 'safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education wherever it is delivered around the world', (QAA strategy, 2014-17). Based on the latest Higher Education Act (HERA, 2017), a student body will be created to give even more prominence to students' voices in quality mechanisms and QAA will be only one among other agencies who can bid for conducting quality evaluations. I will discuss these in details in the literature review.

The English institutional case selected in this study is the leading institute in social and political sciences: the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). ScPo and the LSE are elite institutes: the LSE is part of the British 'golden triangle'⁹ just as ScPo is a privileged grande école among an increasing number of grandes écoles in France. Despite their rivalry, the LSE and ScPo offer dual Masters degrees in international relations, European studies, urban policy, and public affairs.

⁶ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pr229>

⁷ http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/education-at-a-glance-2016_eag-2016-en#.WXyxGvSLTrc#_page209

⁸ <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/dearing1997/dearing1997.html>

⁹ The Golden Triangle is created by London, Cambridge, and Oxford and includes the elite universities: the Oxbridge, and a handful of London-based universities, including: Imperial College, King's college, LSE, and UCL.

The LSE was founded in 1895- some 20 years after the creation of ESLP in Paris- following the recommendations of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and by members of the Fabian Society¹⁰, Beatrice and Sidney Webb. As a public research institute, the LSE aimed ‘to create and share knowledge addressing major social challenges and to shape a better world’¹¹ and has continued doing so through ‘research, education, creative intellectual debate and public engagement’ (ibid). Just as ScPo is a good example of French perceptions of quality, the internal quality mechanism of the LSE may be considered as a reflection of the wider English risk-based approach to quality. However, it shall be noted that the LSE may not be considered as a shining example of excellence in England as it recently only received a ‘bronze’ award in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF 2017). Table 2 provides more details about the LSE.

¹⁰ ‘The Fabian Society is Britain’s oldest political think tank. Founded in 1884, the Society is at the forefront of developing political ideas and public policy on the left’: <http://www.fabians.org.uk/>

¹¹ <http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/financeDivision/pdf/15-0757-FinancialStatements-Proof-7Dec.pdf>

Table 2: The LSE: Key facts Sources: the LSE official webpage ¹² ; the LSE 2015 financial statement ¹³ ; The Times ¹⁴	
Number of students	9,600
Number of campuses	1
Percentage of international students	68% from 140 countries
Percentage of students receiving scholarships	30%
International academic partnerships	12 universities
Number of double degree courses	18
Revenue (2014-2015) (229.6 M)	71.6 % (Tuition fees, consultancies, catering and residences, endowments) 17% (Funding Council Research grants) 11% other sources
Alumni	160,000 (Nobel Prize winners; British MPs)
Graduate employment rate	83.4% within 6 months
Staff	3,300 (44% from countries outside England): 2,000 full-time and 1,300 part-time
QS world University ranking	2013-14: 68 ; 2014-15: 71 ; 2015-16: 35 ; 2016-17: 37 ; 2017-18: 35
QS ranking by subject (politics 1 Int'l Studies)	2013-14: 2 ; 2014-15: 3 ; 2015-16: 4 ; 2016-17: 3 ;

¹² <http://www.lse.ac.uk/aboutLSE/keyFacts/home.aspx>

¹³ <http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/financeDivision/pdf/15-0757-FinancialStatements-Proof-7Dec.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/education/gooduniversityguide/article4212194.ece>

1.3. Rationale

1.3.1. Significance of the study

The primary significance of this study is that it fills a gap that exists in research on systems designed to promote quality (QA, QE) in French higher education. Throughout the EdD degree, I mostly concentrated my research on topics such as internationalisation and quality of higher education particularly in the context of England. I was able to choose from among an abundant number of articles and books on these topics. I was struck by the limited number of books and articles on the same topics in the French context. Therefore, I considered that conducting and sharing the results of a comparative research on quality in France would be a worthwhile effort.

Additionally, this study fills a knowledge gap that exists in the literature on the '*situated meaning of quality*'. This is a gap that cannot be filled by the large scale and quantitative studies that are mainly conducted at the EU level- although they are invaluable contributions on which this study builds on. The European University Association (EUA) has, for instance, led several consecutive projects to explore internal quality cultures and definitions that are dominantly quantitative, for instance: The Quality Culture Project (2002-2006) '*Examining Quality Culture in Higher Education Institutions, EQC project (2009-2012)*'. As a comparative qualitative case study, the current research provides a real-life account of how quality is differently constructed through local power networks and cultural frameworks. The existing policy oriented and quantitative case studies may provide an insight into the 'end-result' rather than analysing the conditions, policies, and practices that have shaped quality. Additionally, as a cross-national comparative analysis, this study is particularly advantageous because it 'uncovers the unique features and unconscious assumptions that possess our vision when we study only a single country, generally our own' (Clark, 1983:2).

Another added-value of this study lies in its focus on the impact of quality mechanisms on academics' practice. Several studies have shown that there is a

mismatch between planned quality systems and their intended impacts on academics (Harvey & Newton, 2007; D'Andrea, 2007; Dill, 2007; Rosa et al., 2012). In addition, many studies have considered quality mechanisms as panopticons with no transformative benefits for academics. For instance, Shore & Roberts (1993) compare QA to Foucault's panopticon where all inmates regulate their own behaviour under the supposedly constant gaze of inspectors inside the central watchtower; Terry (1995:9) considers quality audits in Australian universities as an 'education panopticon'; Harrison (2003) sees the establishment of CNAA in the UK as a panopticon; Morley (2003:170) states that the QA systems are panoptical and create 'major misrecognition and inequalities'. Similarly, Drummond (2003) points out the resemblance between 'knowledge economy' discourses in higher education with Foucault's technologies of self by the means of which individuals change themselves to become moral or ethical subjects in a panopticon; and Telkan & Lomas (2009) indicate that studies across European countries have shown no transformative impact of QA on academics' practice and students' learning. Seyma & Smith (2016) argue that performance management mechanisms in South African universities act as 'panopticonism' that embed intellectually repressive conditions in academia. Likewise, Rochester & Hyslop-Margison (2016:108) indicate that internal quality assessments are 'clearly mechanisms of 'panopticonic' surveillance, ideological manipulation and political control' that 'result in increasingly passive faculty unwilling to exercise their full spectrum of academic freedom and collegial governance responsibilities'

These portrayals dominate the literature and justify the 'interest to further investigate how individual teachers experience QA' (Rosa et al., 2012) and the ways the norm-setting QA mechanisms may have an impact on their practice. As Newton (2010) emphasised, only empirical studies carried out in university settings are capable of providing such 'situated' understandings which makes the current study a worthwhile research and a complementary effort to the existing knowledge on the topic.

1.3.2. Professional/Academic motivation

While writing on quality in higher education in England, Morley (2006:85), refers to an extract of her conversation and states: 'a French professor laughed out loud when she heard that student completion rates were performance indicators in Britain. She reminded me that the opposite is the case in France- the fewer students who left the course successfully, the higher its status'. This interesting example is only one among my own observations that motivated me to conduct this study.

By the time I was conducting the interviews for this study in 2015, my experience of 'quality' in the French education system was enriched by a PhD ERASMUS exchange experience (2012-2013) in a public university (Rene Descartes-Sorbonne V), and the second Master's degree that I pursued (2013-2014) at ScPo (Paris School of International Affairs- PSIA). In addition, I worked as a part-time English teacher at the British Council-Paris and as an adjunct-professor in political sciences at ScPo and gained an invaluable insight into the ways French children, youngsters, parents and teachers perceived learning and teaching quality.

The big missing link between my British and French higher education experiences was the 'quality of service'. It seemed to me that service was an unknown Martian expression that has never been translated into the culture of the French public and private institutions- unless of course one paid an overrated price for a bag made of the skin of a tortured dead animal in a luxurious brand shop. And worse yet, everyone seemed to be used to this chronic lack of service as every time I opened my mouth to complain, people replied: but we are in France, you know?!

I did not wish to- and neither could I afford to- find a remedy to this chronic shortcoming. What interested me was unfolding the underlying reasons that created two strikingly different approaches to educational quality in the two countries. As a teacher and a student, I yearned for explanations that differentiated my experiences in a French university, a French grande école, and

a British university. More importantly, I wanted to know the underlying socio-cultural reasons that created these different approaches to quality.

This thesis is, therefore, a documentation of my professional experience and reflections and a review of literature. It has provided a unique opportunity of reflective practice in the course of my professional and academic endeavours. I am hoping it would help me with my future professional trajectory as I mean to be involved in an academic or a 'quality-related' professional exercise in learning and development. I am convinced that this study is also worthwhile for fellow practitioners in academia, as it offers a comparative scrutiny of how daily academic practice is shaped, constrained, and altered by quality control systems which in different degrees of intensity are intended as policies that are panoptical for working academics.

1.4. Ethical concerns

This study was conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011).

The use of secondary sources of information, i.e., policy texts and discourses gives rise to ethical concerns related to the ***'responsibilities of the researcher to the community of educational researchers'***. I made a conscious effort in safeguarding the reputation of the community of educational researchers by maintaining honesty, integrity, and professionalism in all stages of research including data collection, analysis, and report writing. I also took measures to ensure the authenticity of texts and their sources. In order to respect my ***'responsibilities to participants'*** the interviews were conducted respecting the criteria of *'informed consent'*, *'confidentiality and anonymity'*. All interviewees received emails with an outline of the study that invited them to voluntarily take part in the study knowing that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Furthermore, each participant has been given a pseudonym and all information that reveals or leads to their identity has been extracted. I also understand that I have a ***'responsibility to educational professionals, policy makers and the general public'***. Accordingly, the outcomes of this study will be published and shared with all the participants as well as the larger audience interested in educational research.

1.5. Impact of the study

As a qualitative study, the findings of this research can offer several benefits. It provides a deeper understanding of the underlying local power relations that form quality norms and discourses and how these are internalised, negotiated, and practised. It provides a basis of comparison and an overview of the best practices for quality managers and practitioners in each context. In addition, it can benefit sociologists as it provides an insight into a social institution, i.e. higher education, that usually mirrors the collective conscious of any given context. Additionally, English and French faculty members may develop a better understanding into the impacts of two different conceptualisations of 'quality' and how these could be beneficial or preventative in the daily practice of their colleagues. In fact, as this study helped me engage in a reflexive practice, I am hoping that it would also help other academics in doing so.

1.6. Delimitations of the study

This study is limited in its scope and coverage as it is a small-scale research. As a comparative case study, it provides detailed information within a limited time and space. Therefore, it may not be extended to other cases and contexts or to the same contexts in another time span. However, it can provide a reliable and solid basis for further research. It is important to note that the two selected universities are elite institutions and may differ from other public or private institutions in their contexts. Another limitation is, of course, my restricted time and ability as a researcher to read all the literature available on the topic. In addition, it is only inevitable that my personal and professional experiences and the choice of language play a role in the reconstruction of the local reality of the cases. Another researcher, using other methods and other language codes may have written a completely different thesis on the same topic.

1.7. Outline of the Study

The next chapter after this introduction is dedicated to the literature review. The chapters following the literature review will discuss the conceptual framework, methodology, findings and analysis of data, and a final chapter will be on 'discussions, reflections, and further recommendations'.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the modalities of power, styles of higher education systems, and the construction of 'quality' in France and England. The main focus is on the period following the 1999 Bologna Process, however it also looks further back whenever necessary. In reviewing the history of higher education in the two contexts, I have followed the advice of Durkheim who in 1905 called on students' 'attention to the importance of history for the understanding of the sociology of education' [1956a] asserting that 'in reality, there is nothing in my knowledge of sociology which merits the name, which doesn't have a historical character' (1982a:211; quoted in Bellah, 1959:448).

This literature review is divided into three main sections. The first part is called '**quality assurance in higher education: the origins of a modern panopticon**'. The aim of this part is to sketch out the broader international and the European context that altered the traditional value systems in higher education. The second section is called '**Understanding French higher education: the history and the Politics of the State**' and the third part is '**Understanding English higher education and its risk management**'. These two chapters analyse the local historical, political, and socio-cultural trends in higher education systems and the gradual developments in quality conceptions in France and England, respectively. I have conducted this literature review bearing in mind that quality is a '*contested enterprise*' that is constantly negotiated and reconstructed through local policies and discourses.

Prior to reviewing of the literature, some of the keywords are defined below:

2.2. Key terms

Evaluative State: With the rise of the neoliberalism in 1970s, the ‘welfare State’ lost its legitimacy and was replaced by a new ‘Evaluative State’ as Giannone (2014) explains. The Evaluative State assumes a ‘facilitating and strategist’ role in higher education through new modes of public management and apparent democratic ‘but deeply conservative’ (Morley, 2003) quality assurance discourses and policies. In this study, the Evaluative State is used to refer to a shift in governmental attention from merely monitoring the financial inputs towards an evaluation of outputs or outcomes through quality assurance agencies and their reports (Neave 1998; Humfrey, 2011).

New Public Management: Simply put, NPM is an application of ‘corporate governance’ (Hénard & Mitterle, 2010) rules of the game, i.e., ‘disaggregation, customer satisfaction, competition, entrepreneurial spirit to public institutions such as universities in order to increase their efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and quality of services’, (Berg et al. 2008). In this study, I agree with de Vries (2010) and consider NPM as an abstraction that is implemented in great variety ‘explained by the characteristics of the various countries, distinctive political regimes and organisational and institutional cultures’.

Panopticon: The word ‘panopticon’ is composed of two parts: both taken from Greek with ‘pan’ standing for ‘all’ and ‘Opticon’ - optikón- meaning: sight or seeing. As a concept, panopticon was first used in 1791 by the English philosopher and social reformist, Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) to describe an ideal society or an institution where a few could administer instruction, discipline, and regulation over many and maintain order and social control. The term later appeared in Foucault’s ‘Discipline and Punish’ (1975) as he considered social institutions such as education systems deploy ‘surveillance, hierarchy, discipline, and classification by means of which individuals become ever more regulated and controlled’ (Oxford dictionary of sociology, 2009:544). As shown in Chapter

1, a number of studies have used Foucault's panopticon framework to analyse the influence of QA/QE systems on HE and academics. Whilst this study uses the concepts employed by Foucault (e.g., norm-setting power of quality discourses and agencies) it does not assume that systems of surveillance have the degree of control over individuals or institutions that many have claimed. Consequently, I use the term panopticon to describe a system of governance that demonstrate the norms, regulations and discourses pertaining to 'quality' designed to create a shared quality culture across HEIs and their academics.

Power: This study adopts the definition of power by Foucault (1979:18) as particular techniques of the State not so much 'to impose laws on men, but rather to dispose of things'. Power produces forms of subjectivity 'that the individual internalises and thus becomes the agent of their own disciplining, rendering themselves docile at the same time as more capable' (Mann, 2008). As Foucault explains, power operates through: discourses and discursive practices; disciplinary practices and bio-power (controlling the way we live through education, public health); and via technologies of self (that individuals internalise and obey).

Risk-based management: This study adopts Douglas (2009:46) definition: 'risk management is the identification, assessment, and prioritization of risks followed by coordinated and economical application of resources to minimize, monitor, and control the probability and/or impact of unfortunate events. Risk management is one of several new approaches to quality assurance and has emerged based on new developments in the UK as 'a means of calling universities to account against the background of a pan-European loss of trust in institutions and the growing use of markets as instruments of public policy' (Raban, 2014: 89).

Quality: is the main concept of this study and despite having attracted much attention in research, still remains an ambiguous and contested theme (Harvey & Williams, 2010 Maguire & Gibbs, 2013) 'on which different worldviews can be projected' (Saarinen, 2008a: 342). This means that quality can mean different

things to students, academics, institutions, administrators, employers, governments and professional organisations (Zou & Rasmussen, 2012). Quality as a word originates from Latin 'qualis' meaning 'what kind of'. As a concept in higher education, there are five ways in which quality can be understood, as Harvey and Knight (1996) suggested: *excellence* of the end product or service, *perfection* or consistency based on standards, *fitness for purpose* whether public or private, *value for money* to meet customers' expectations, and *transformation* of students (empowerment). In this study, quality is understood as a value-laden concept that is an 'intrinsic part of policy making' (Neave, 1998, p. 265); it operates as a norm-setting steering instrument through which different interest groups negotiate and maintain their power in governing higher education by 'limiting other interest groups' power to influence the debate' (Filippakou, 2011, P.17).

Quality Assurance (QA): in this study QA is based on the definitions of Morley (2003) and Woodhouse (1999) as a series of policies, attitudes, actions and procedures necessary to translate particular rationalities and moralities into new forms of governance and professional behaviour. QA is a political technology with common-sense assumptions that re-engineers higher education and creates a power relation between the observer and the observed. It is a governance tool that balances out the power of universities as autonomous institutions through different purposes of '*accountability, accreditation, government/state control, improvement/enhancement, international reputation, public reassurance/confidence, public information, punishment, ranking, regulation of academic standards, resource allocation/reward, standardisation*' (Williams, 2010: 5-6).

Quality enhancement (QE): is a *continuous process of maintaining and improving quality* at different levels of an institution which 'links internal quality culture (autonomy, transparency, and effectiveness) to external quality mechanisms- in this sense, external audits serve as triggers for internal quality development (Gvaramadze, 2008).

Quality culture (QC): this study adopts Kleijnen et al. (2009: 235) definition: 'characterised by two elements: a *cultural/psychological* element of shared values, beliefs and expectations at individual/staff level as well as a *structural/managerial* element with defined processes at institutional level, the ensemble of which enhance quality and aim at coordinating individual efforts'. Within a quality culture approach, *quality as transformation* enhances individuals' (staff and learners) educational experience and *quality as enhancement* maximises institutional autonomy, transparency, and effectiveness (EUA, 2007).

2.3. Quality Assurance in Higher Education: the origins of a modern panopticon

2.3.1. The International context

As major actors in public service, higher education systems adopted quality management mechanisms by the mid-80s. Total quality management (TQM) was a management tool used by the Japanese car industry, e.g., Toyota Production System (TPS). It was based on Deming's 1986 'shewhart cycle' also known as 'PDCA- Plan, Do, Check, Action cycle' and its underlying philosophy was the Japanese *Kaizen*- literally meaning 'continuous improvement' or 'change for better'. *Kaizen* emphasises 'continuous self-monitoring, improvement, preparedness, and work ethic' (Morley, 2003) for all employees- managers and workers alike- to eliminate waste and to increase profit through standardisation and surveillance. According to Prata Savitskaya & Stensaker (2010), higher education systems adopted TQM either 'voluntarily or due to national requirements' as part of their attempt to attract and satisfy customers in a context of the rising importance of neoliberal market rules.

The temptation to adopt TQM was manifest in the willingness of local authorities to 'modernise the higher education' hence maintaining their soft power in steering the higher education. Rappleye (2012:124) explains that 'references to elsewhere' are in fact means of 'political production... that are deployed to both catalyse and stymie attempts at reform.... and could come in the form of

legitimation, caution, scandalising or glorification'. Such reforms are made possible when a *big push* creates a wave of 'epidemiological temptation...and the rush to do something because others are doing it' (Neave, 2014:33 in Amaral & Rosa, 2014).

It is important to emphasise that the concept of QA was not at all a new one in the European higher education systems. As Neave (1994:116 quoted in Rosa et al. 2007) emphasises quality is not "here to stay" if only for the self-evident reason that across the centuries of the universities' existence in Europe, it never departed'. Forms of QA in higher education could already be distinguished in the Middle ages: Oxbridge had self-governing communities of scholars; the University of Paris had an accountability scheme under the chancellor of the cathedral of Notre Dame; and at the University of Bologna the quality of teaching was controlled and led by students, according to Amaral & Rosa (2014). Quality has been indeed woven into the very fabric of universities. However, quality was an almost exclusive concern of those inside the universities who had the authority and the knowledge to judge and ensure it within academia and the discipline.

There are several convergent factors that can explain the adoption of TQM in higher education. One reason was the *massification and expansion of higher education* and the consequent need to convey reliable information about provision to a larger and a more heterogeneous body of students (Land & Gordon, 2013). In such a context, quality assurance is seen as 'the antithesis'¹⁵ of mass higher education (Morley, 2003). As Henkel (2000) and Delanty (2001) state, the underlying assumption was that a mass system could not be left to the intrinsic motivation and commitments of the academics and HEIs were to be regulated through an external form of scrutiny.

The other element was the *change in the perceptions* of the role of the

¹⁵ The Hegelian triadic idea "thesis–antithesis–synthesis: Also called the dialectic method, this approach includes an initial proposition (thesis), the possible criticisms and negations of that thesis (antithesis), and a final stage where the conflicting ideas are reconciled in a new form (synthesis). Dialectic is a dominant approach in education system of France. For more info on French education system: *Nadeau, Jean-Benoit; Barlow, Julie (2003). Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong: Why We Love France But Not The French. Sourcebooks, Inc.*

higher education in the climate of neoliberalism and under the watch of the evaluative State. The 'economic crisis, the rising numbers of unemployed, the emergence of neoliberal discourses, the advancement of technology and globalisation, the diversity in types of institutions, students and staff recruited, and the programmes offered were at the origin of a new perception of universities shaped by an economic rationality', (Teixeira, 2009a, 2009b; Trow, 2001; Teichler, 1988). HEIs were now seen as institutions in charge of training a skilled workforce for the globally competing knowledge economies as opposed to their previous role as 'social institutions with specific cultural and social functions' (Gumport, 2001). Therefore, by the end of 80s, a synergy between 'plural modernisations of the academy, polity, economy, society, and culture' (Scott, 1995:9-10) could be observed that defined higher education as a 'commodity and a service, tradable and governed by different stakeholders' (Dale et al., 2012).

Figure 1 below summarises the shift from the traditional to the quasi-market university and the external elements that have triggered such a shift.

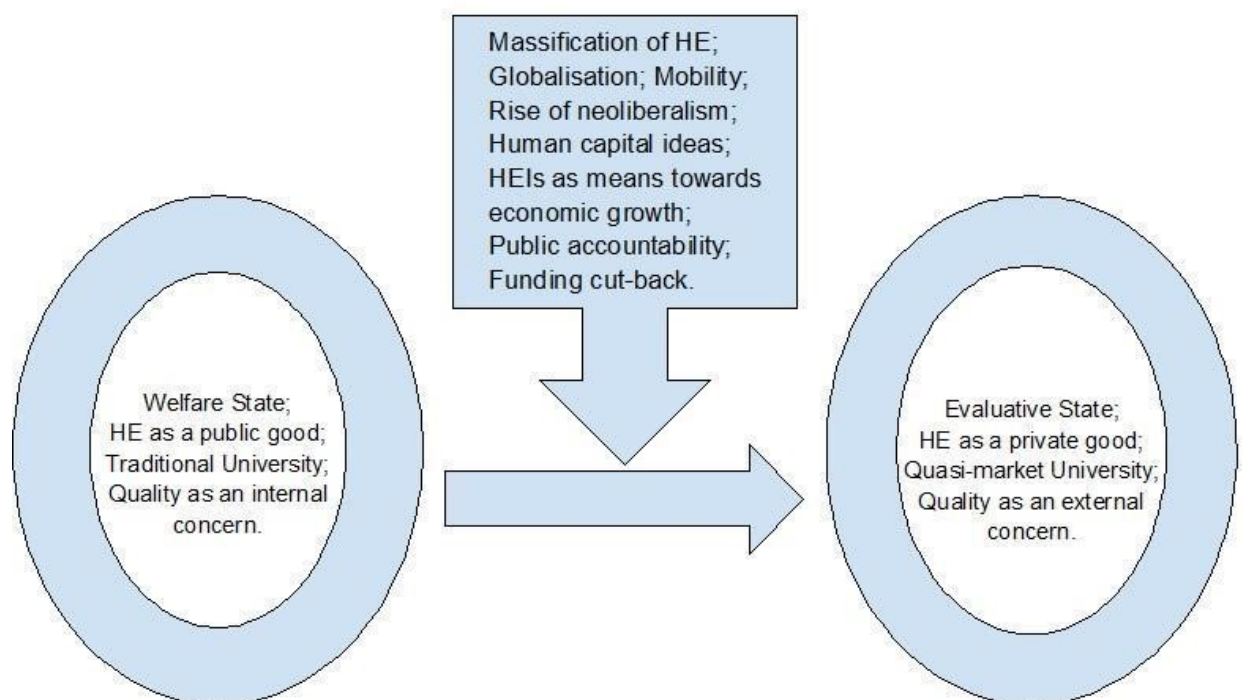


Figure.1: summary of elements triggering a shift towards quasi-market universities, Juliette Torabian, Dec 2016.

2.3.2. The European Political Agenda: attractiveness in a competing market

In Europe, the official establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and a new approach towards quality is associated with the signing of the Bologna Process in 1999. As Huisman & Westerheijden (2010:63) explain one significant 'action line in the 1999 Bologna Declaration was to promote 'European cooperation in quality assurance with a view to develop comparable criteria and methodologies' (the 5th Bologna objective).

By joining the Bologna Process, the European countries created what Weber calls a 'legitimate power'. The Bologna process is the emblem of the EHEA epitomising Aristotle's 'ideal of politics' where a new order is negotiated to create unity out of diversity. The construction of the EHEA was a political production that appropriated the global trends of open and competitive markets in higher education to the European context and shuffled the long-established power relations in academia by imposing rules of NPM and external QA. Otherwise, as mentioned before, the concern for quality has existed as long as the European university itself.

To pursue the objectives of the EHEA, the ENQA¹⁶ was eventually established in 2000 and its role has been further emphasised in the Communiqués of Prague (2001), Salamanca Convention (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005), and London (2007) declarations. The ENQA is regarded as the potential contributor to and coordinator of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG). It attempts to create the conditions of trust, relevance and comparability of degrees, mobility, and attractiveness of HEIs within the EHEA. The ENQA remains the *main* organisation to share information on good practices in QA among the European States, quality agencies and HEIs. Several other European institutions have been also established to implement the 5th objective of the Bologna Process. These include: The European University Association (EUA); the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB); and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE).

¹⁶ In 2004 the Network was transformed into the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). <http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/about-enqa/enqa-history/>

The ENQA exercises soft power over the European HEIs that aspire to compete in the global market and see their own competitive power reinforced as part of the EHEA. For instance, according to Stensaker (2003:152), QA mechanisms across European countries are developed based on the ENQA's recommendations and are generally characterised by four elements: 'a national coordinating body that administers the evaluations conducted; an institutional self-evaluation phase; an external evaluation; and the production of a report'. The relationship between the ENQA, the States, their quality agencies, and the HEIs may better be explained by using the example of a tilt-a-whirl (a fairground attraction), as shown in Figure 2 below.

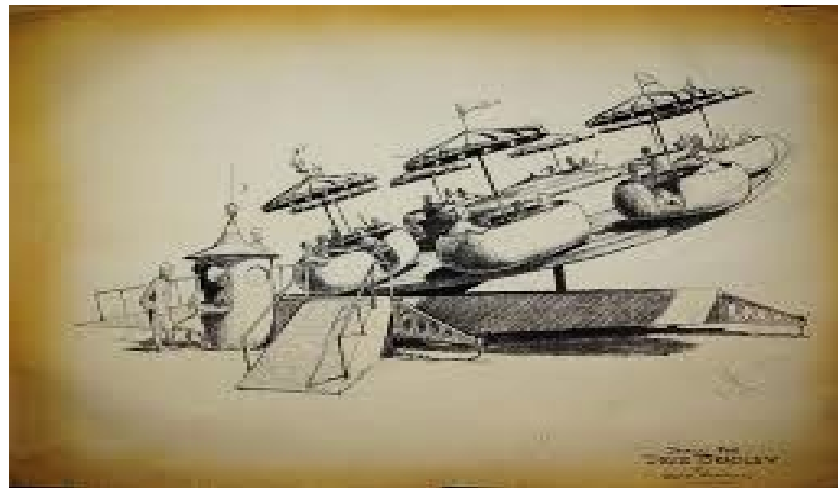


Figure 2: tilt-a-whirl

Similar to a tilt-a-whirl, the ENQA provides a rotating platform for the States and their HEIs to evolve in different directions and at variable but controlled speeds. Thus, the HEIs assume their autonomy while they are in fact attached to the platform (ENQA) at fixed pivot points (the States). The rotation of this platform, i.e., the new norms of ENQA, will be transferred to the rotating cars (the local quality agencies) resulting in centrifugal and gravitational forces that keep the complex national systems of higher education under the control of the platform. The weight of the passengers (HEIs) may intensify or decrease the spinning motion of the cars on a tilt-a-whirl. That means the HEIs' with already established prestige may be better positioned or more resistant to the scrutiny of quality agencies in comparison to the newly established universities (i.e., the new passengers with a lighter weight)! Likewise, the passengers (the HEIs) may

change their position so as to reduce the impact of the external norms (rotation of the platform). For instance, the rise of 'quality enhancement' restores academia's grip over defining and practicing quality as opposed to the external QA regimes (Amaral, 2014) while risk-based QA alters this power relation favouring the States and their policies. Finally, the role of the market can be assigned to the person sitting in the control cabin outside the tilt-a-whirl with the possibility to slow down or increase the speed of the whirl thus controlling the gravitational force on HEIs and the States' rotational trajectory.

In the next part, I will analyse the local construction of quality in French HE.

2.4. Understanding French higher education: the history and the politics of the State

This part is an introduction to the French higher education system. It includes three main sections including: ***A fragmented and Centralised Bureaucracy: A higher education for the political elite; Towards an evaluative State: post-1968 to 2012; Cosmetic changes: recent developments under the Socialist Party (2012-2017).*** I have particularly focused on the French grandes écoles for two reasons: a) ScPo is a grande école; b) grandes écoles' training and degrees generally represent the dominant local definition of quality. This section will provide a background to the findings of the study and will help answering the research questions.

2.4.1. A fragmented and centralised bureaucracy: a higher education for the political elite

French higher education is a uniquely complex system which is difficult to read from the outside. Its centralised system is an aggregation of sharply hierarchical institutions that are funded and governed by different ministries and non-State partners which does not assent to the more habitual divide between private and public institutions. According to Clark's (1983) categories, the French

system is a typical example of a 'single public system with multiple sectors'- Mascret (2015) affirms this is still the case today. The French higher education has certain other identifying characteristics including: a historically inscribed vertical differentiation between the universities and the grandes écoles; a deeply-rooted republican belief in meritocracy; the central role of the State and its political and legal instruments in the governance of the sector; a separation between research and teaching; a dominant culture of specialised professional training for the political elite in the grandes écoles and the scientific education limited to the universities; an omnipresent egalitarian belief in access to university education as a public service which also regulates youth unemployment; and a perpetual closed circle of power and influence shared between the elites, i.e., the State and the grandes écoles

To understand the French higher education, it is necessary to go back in time.

The history of university in France dates back to the Middle Ages. The 'University of Paris' was established in the 13th century- blessed and approved by the Church as was the case with Oxford and Cambridge in England. Between the 13th and the 16th centuries universities kept appearing around the country, e.g., Universities of Toulouse (1229); Grenoble (1339); Valence (1452); and Reims (1548). While the Kings and the Church maintained their authority over the universities, these early HEIs enjoyed an established monopoly over the training and appointment of their students to the highest political or religious posts. This part of universities' role was later on handed over to a parallel system of institutions called: grandes écoles.

Why did the grandes écoles take precedence over universities? Fridenson (2011)¹⁷ explains that by the 18th century due to political and social realities, universities have turned into confined bastions of the discipline and pure theory and 'suffered from teacher absenteeism and shallow curricula' (Bienaymé, 1991:660). The country needed roads, bridges, schools, and a trained personnel for State's administration and the universities failed to respond to these needs. In

¹⁷ Interview no. 240785, 17 May 2011, AEF

addition, as Attali (1998) affirms, the central political power has perpetually feared the dominance of the universities particularly under the rising influence of the Church and has therefore sought to reduce their power.

Subsequently, both during the monarchy and after the 1789 revolution, the State invents a parallel system of *grandes écoles* where it can play the central role, train the elite, and respond to the practical needs of the society. Some prominent examples of the State's lateral system include: Collège de France (1530), and the '*special schools*'- later known as *grandes écoles*- like 'Ecole des Ponts (1747), Ecole Polytechnique (1794), Ecole des Mines (1783), Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques (1872), Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA-1945), and Ecole Normale Supérieure (1794). Gradually, the universities slip down the hierarchy ladder and the *grandes écoles* assume their role as the means of 'social reproduction' for the political elite.

Universities endure further degradation during the 18th and the 19th centuries. In 1793 universities were abolished due to their analogies with the professional guilds. 'The revolutionary intellectuals wanted to create a new higher education system more targeted towards professional needs' (Beretz, 2014:154). In 1805, the Napoléonic model emerged which one would assume has been organised in a completely different manner compared to the universities of the 'old regime'. Yet this was not the case. Napoléon can, in fact, be considered as the heir of the *ancien régime* rather than the founder of a new university as Amestoy (1968) explains. The Napoléonic Model was a continuation of a centralised 'hierarchical configuration of institutions and disciplines' (Bourdieu,1984) that executed the death sentence for universities in France, as Musselin (2001) states.

I second Musselin. The Imperial university represents a reproduction of the confederacy between the State and the elites who managed to wipe out even the word 'university' from the texts until its resurgence in the law of 10th July 1896 on the constitution of universities. In addition, the Napoléonic model was in sharp contrast with the German Humboldtian Model. The Imperial University mirrored 'the French revolution... which was as much or more a bureaucratic, mass-

incorporating and state-strengthening revolution as it was (in any sense) a bourgeois revolution' (Skocpol, 1979:179). Thus, contrary to many Continental higher education systems at the time, the French system is the least influenced by the Humboldtian concepts of the centrality of discovery of knowledge, integration of teaching and research, decentralised public authority at regional and national levels, and prominence of philosophy and social sciences over pure science (Mascret, 2015; Berets, 2014; Ben-David, 1977).

The 'elite-building' grandes écoles- as Bourdieu (1996) called them- continued to overshadow the universities in 19th and the 20th century. By the end of the 19th century, the French HE system continues to be further layered horizontally and vertically and the universities remain at the bottom of the vertical layers compared to the grandes écoles. By mid-20th century, even more specialized schools are established by the ministries and chambers of commerce to compensate for the failure of universities and to train their own employees. Thus, the French higher education remains inscribed by what Neave (2014) considers a "Manichean¹⁸ dualism" between the universities and the grandes écoles that appropriated the reproduction strategies of the elite facilitating their 'transition process from "classmates" to "caste mates" ("copains de classe puis copains de caste")' (Beretz, 2014:155). This is how the grandes écoles gradually came to embody the local definition of prestige and hence of quality while universities were equated with lower quality and thus requiring a multitude of modernising reforms.

2.4.2. Towards an evaluative State: post-1968 to 2012

The French universities experienced the first wave of reforms under the Edgar Faure law of 12 November 1968. The main concern of this law was to revitalize the role of the universities through increased autonomy, participation and multidisciplinary. The law was a response to the students' revolt in 1968 but did not bring tangible changes to the established conventions. As Clark (1983:64)

¹⁸ A religious movement initiated by Mani (born in 216 AD in Persian Empire) based on a dualistic view of good and evil.

explains, the grandes écoles and their elite were by then so 'untouchable that it never even became an issue in the great 1968 French educational crisis or in the midst of attempted and effected reforms of the following decades'. Vasconcellos (2006) has an interesting observation and argues that the inegalitarian approach of the French HE system continues because Faure's bill only targeted universities, their student recruitment, and their teaching. It actually did nothing to push the grandes écoles to give up their selective entrance exams and respond to the rapid massification of the HE sector (A 300% rise between 1958-68).

The central bureaucratic power is so deeply inscribed into the very habitus of the French universities by 1968 that the realisation of the Edgar Faure's bill is crippled midway despite General De Gaulle's decision to reform HE. As Kumar, (1975:401) explains: 'The students got university reforms, wide ranging on paper but largely nullified in practice by the hostility and inertia of university administration'. A Sharply hierarchical and centralised system like the French higher education creates normative and cognitive conventions that resist evolution and change. These organisational norms establish a framework within which the professional identities and activities of employees are defined. Hence, any attempt to reform could be interpreted as a threat to the employees' identities and the traditional frames of reference with which they identify themselves hence provoking resistance and rejection.

Nonetheless, the wave of reforms continued from the 1970s onward. The interesting point about these reforms is that there seems to be a strong continuity in the public policy towards higher education despite apparent cleavages between the socialist party (PS) and the right-wing Republicans (LR-previously known as UMP). As Neave (2012:67) observes 'a far greater effort of French higher education policy over the past four decades has been taken up with attempting to solve problems of authority, purpose, study and curricular structure generated by the sustained growth of the student Estate in the universities, not the grandes ecoles'.

A very first step towards a performance-based HE is taken by the Savary law of 1984 which: a) groups universities, research units, and colleges under one

legal title (EPCSP); b) sets their new role to be a rapid creation of new courses to respond to the needs of the increasingly diversified student population; and c) creates the National Committee of Evaluation (CNE) to control the 'rate of delivery of new courses'. This Committee was an 'Independent Administrative Authority' (AAI) that directly reported to the President and not to the Minister of higher education.

The CNE, can be considered as the launching pad of the evaluative State because it introduced the notion of evaluation into French HE. The universities' research sector continued with its own evaluation through the *National Committee for Scientific Research (CoNRS)* created in 1945, the *National Committee for the Evaluation of Research (CNER)* created in 1989 and the evaluation unit of the Ministry of higher education *Mission for Scientific, technical and pedagogy (MSTP)* that was created in 2003. The CNE focused its evaluations on the overall scientific and pedagogic policy of universities. Its evaluations were conducted in a collegial manner: its reports were shared with the universities and their relevant ministries that had the liberty in adopting the recommendations of the reports; and a four-year report was drafted for the President of the Republic. As Neave (2014) explains: 'The essential purpose was to open a 'lateral' flow of public information between institutes of higher education'.

The advancement of the performance-oriented logic in France has its own characteristic. It is true that the 1984 Savary law revitalizes 'the French universities by: a) bestowing them the title of establishments' (Musselin, 2005); and, b) by creating the CNE to help them progress; yet it legally confirms and hence widens the binary divide between the grandes écoles and the universities. In fact, the 1984 Savary law adopts a completely opposite direction compared to the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act in England that facilitated putting an end to the existing binary divide between the polytechnics and the universities in the UK. Another peculiarity can be observed in the Organic law of finances (LOLF, 2001) that pushed for the creation of a funding system based on annually set objectives and performance indicators (excellence funding). Nonetheless, as Neave (2014 & 2012) clarifies, the legislators did not succumb to the notion of

higher education as a consumer good or the privatisation and extension of competitive entrance exams to universities. They circumspectly guarded their universities as a 'public service' under the authority of the State.

The French State pushed for a culture of external QA in 2006. To do so, the State dissolved and merged the three evaluation agencies, (CNE; CNER; MSTP) and created an independent agency called the Agency for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (AERES). The AERES was 'tasked with evaluating research and higher education institutions, research organisations, research units, higher education programmes, teaching and degrees and the approval of staff evaluation procedures...to improve the quality of the French research and higher education system in accordance with the European recommendations and decisions of European ministers in the context of the Bologna Process' (AERES website, 2016)¹⁹. The AERES administered cycles of evaluation in five designated regions of A, B, C, D, and E (see appendix 2) following a logic similar to that of QAA in England, i.e., a self-evaluation stage by the university, the visit of the experts, and the publication of a final public evaluation report (see appendix 3).

The AERES can be considered as part of a crisis management package *à la française* as French higher education faced the reality of globalisation and the higher education market mechanisms in 2003, in a rather harsh way. In the Shanghai ranking of that year, only two French universities appear in the top 100- 'Pierre et Marie Curie university as 65th and the Ecole Normale Supérieure as 102nd', (Veltz, 2007). This created a traumatic shock wave in the country. The State grasped this opportunity to reform the HE and to showcase the then questioned 'excellence' of the French universities. The Campus France note no.47 (2015)²⁰ provides a summary of the reforms following the 2003 shock: creation of PRES (Pôles de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur) in 2006 that aimed to group and pool together the resources of universities, research centres, and the grandes écoles of one territory to increase the chances of each PRES²¹

¹⁹ <http://www.aeres-evaluation.com/Agency/Presentation/Profile-of-the-Agency>

²⁰ http://ressources.campusfrance.org/publi_institu/agence_cf/notes/fr/note_47_fr.pdf

²¹ More information on the website of the higher education and research ministry in France: <http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid20724/les-poles-recherche-enseignement-superieur.html#creation-role-pres>

unit in 'being more visible and gain a place in the rankings'²²; the 2007 law on the freedom and responsibility of universities (LRU); and the 2013 ESR law which pushed for universities' autonomy, accountability and performance-based funding.

Therefore, AERES was created as part of a broader and delayed response package of the French evaluative State to an external shock. Normally, when governments wait to see the impact of a new initiative- such as the establishment of quality agencies- in other countries, they are considered to be adopting a *free-rider policy*. This helps them reduce costs by learning from others' experiences and by adopting the best practice. However, the delay in the establishment of AERES in France cannot be interpreted as a case of free-rider policy. Garçon (2012)²³ explains the reason is: 'there is a vanity, a certain provincialism, an ancestral condescension *à la française* with regards to the US on the one hand and Europe on the other. Even today, while the Shanghai ranking showed that our system was far from the best, France remains convinced that the whole world envies them...the higher education in France is schizophrenic'.

However, the establishment of AERES did not reduce the authority of the State in steering HE. Quite the contrary. It reinforced 'long-standing systematic identities' (Rappleye, 2010:123). For instance, the Agency was categorised as an AAI while its president and members of council were nominated by the State 'from among researchers, teachers, entrepreneurs and parliamentarians who are known for the quality of their job' as the former president of AERES, Jean-François Dhainaut (2008)²⁴ explained. This explains why Neave (2012) considers the AERES as an end product of the gradual deviation of the CNE from independence and representing a return to national process of policy formation rather than acting as an honest broker.

²² DGES, "la coopération entre les grandes écoles et les universités", texte préparatoire au rapport prévu à l'article 13 de la loi de programme pour la recherche du 18 Avril 2006, 25 Octobre 2006, page 5

²³ L'enseignement supérieur français est schizophrénique', by François Garçon in Le point 20/06/2012. Available at:

www.lepoint.fr/societe/l-enseignement-superieur-francais-est-schizophrenic-20-06-2012-1475488_23.php.

²⁴ L'AERES passée au crible : y-a-t-il une révolution de l'évaluation ? Numéro Spécial réalisé en partenariat avec l'agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur, l'Officiel, no.30, Sept-Oct 2008. Available at: www.jfmela.free.fr/aeres_supplement-ors.

2.4.3. Cosmetic changes: recent developments under the Socialist Party (2012-2017)

With the arrival of the Socialist party in 2012, fervent opponents of the AERES found an occasion to express their criticism. Many of the academics and scientists considered the evaluations of the AERES detrimental to their former collegial evaluations and resented the new evaluation-sanction reports that promoted competitiveness through grading. However, the university presidents argued that a total abolition of evaluations of the AERES was unnecessary and a few adjustments could improve its process (Mascret, 2015; Chevaillier, 2013). Motivated by political manoeuvring and symbolic policy actions, rather than any intentions to rupture with the quality policies of the former Right-wing government, the Socialists under Mr. Holland replaced AERES with another AAI called (Haut Conseil de l'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur- Hcéres).

The Hcéres was created on November 2014 by decree no. 2014-1365. Certain changes were introduced: a) the agency is not to evaluate but to supervise and validate the evaluation processes that would be handled by universities and research centres themselves; b) the evaluation reports on research teams and teaching would have a detailed confidential part and a synthetic public part and; c) finally, two students were included in the agency's board which was not the case in AERES (Hcéres report of activity, 2014²⁵; Mascret, 2015). Despite these *cosmetic shifts*, Hcéres remains under the authority of the State: the president of Hcéres is nominated by the government who in turn nominates the three directors of the Agency's departments.

Prior to the election of President Macron in May 2017, the final policy directive under the Socialist Party was a White Paper published on 31st Jan 2017. The French higher education system has not had a clear overarching strategy up until the publication of this White paper according to Clark (1983) and Vasconcellos (2006). Drafting such a national HE strategy was first suggested in

²⁵ Rapport d'activité 2014 de l'Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur (AERES), Présenté par Didier Houssin, Président en exercice du Hcéres et adopté par le Conseil le 17 décembre 2014, www.Hcéres.fr/content/download/.../RAP_2014_22122014VD.pdf

the 2013 ESR law. In 2014²⁶ an initial report on priorities for the national strategy was submitted to the minister of HE based on which the recent 2017 White Paper was developed.

Both the 2014 Preliminary Report and the final 2017 White Paper recognise that the French higher education system is in crisis, yet surprisingly do not include 'QA or QE' as part of the remedy. The subject of external evaluation is dealt with in the last and the shortest chapter (V) in only 4 pages of this 240-page document. It encourages prioritising teaching over research and suggests adding a 'pedagogic knowledge exam' to the general recruitment exam for lecturers and professors.

The new HE White Paper reiterates the authority of the State, this time 'not as the central decision maker but as the strategist State that has confidence in its HEIs' capacity to implement the vision of the White Paper' (White paper 2017:50²⁷) and focuses on five objectives to 'build the France of tomorrow' including: a) reconstruction of the economy and the society; b) internationalisation; c) improving equality of access for all; d) inventing the higher education of the 21st century; e) responding to the aspirations of the youth.

While the publication of the 2017 White Paper is a positive step, I do not detect a *Copernican revolution* in this brand-new French strategy (StraNES)²⁸. Particularly, because supplemental to this White paper is the latest Code of Education that was published on 13 July 2017. It further emphasises the binary divide between the universities and the grandes écoles and fails to include tangible directives to equally enhance quality in both sectors. Nonetheless, as the State assumes a strategist role, one might conclude that the most recent trend in quality would be a move from external quality assurance towards internal quality enhancement mechanisms. The real impact of this White Paper will remain unknown until the Senate and the national assembly and several

²⁶ Stratégie nationale de l'enseignement supérieur Rapport d'étape du Comité StraNESA Monsieur Benoît Hamon, ministre de l'Education nationale, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche et Madame Geneviève Fioraso, secrétaire d'Etat à l'Enseignement supérieur et à la Recherche Par Sophie Béjean, présidente du comité StraNES https://cache.media.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/file/STRANES/05/3/Rapport_etape_StraNES_8_juillet_-_17h04_339053.pdf

²⁷ Livre blanc de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche 2017,

²⁸ La Stratégie Nationale d'Enseignement Supérieur

overlapping committees discuss it thoroughly for the next three to four years- and I am being very optimistic in this assessment.

Next, I will delineate the construction of 'quality' in higher education on the other side of the Manche, in England.

2.5. Understanding English higher education and its risk management

This section describes the key historical moments and political decisions that have shaped the higher education quality in England. In order to sketch out the gradual construction of quality mechanisms, I have divided this section into three main subsections: ***a) The pre-1992 higher education; b) The post-1992 HE; and c) recent developments under the Coalition government: the shift towards risk management.***

Before I start this section, it is necessary to point out the following: the higher education system in Britain has a federal structure. Clark (1983:57) categorises the British HE as a '*multiple public system: multiple sector*'. This means that there are several kinds of HEIs including a hierarchy of universities, technical colleges and polytechnics, teacher-training colleges, and a set of dispersed further colleges all of which operate under a distinct region: England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland. Within the scope of this study, I have focused on the English universities. Additionally, as the government has attempted to create incentives for QA and QE through funding, it has been necessary to delineate the shifts in funding schemes to understand the change in quality approaches.

2.5.1. From the medieval era to pre-1992: the development of a binary system

England is home to two of the oldest universities of the World: Oxford and Cambridge, commonly known as 'Oxbridge'. It is in the 12th century that Oxford university was established as King Henry II banned English students from attending the University of Paris²⁹ and so Oxford University become home to disaffected English and European students and scholars who 'abandoned Paris during times of crisis in 1167 and 1229' (Marlow-Ferguson & Lopez, 2002:1486). Cambridge University was founded in 1209 and was granted a Royal Charter by King Henry III in 1231³⁰. The elitism and selective admission policies of the Oxbridge resemble the French grandes écoles.

Unlike the University of Paris that was suspended for a century during the turmoil of the French revolution (1793-1896), Oxbridge maintained their elite reproduction role without interruption. In effect, the two universities jealously safeguarded their monopoly in training *the political elite* opposing, at any occasion, the establishment of new universities until the 19th Century. I emphasise 'the political elite' because the Oxbridge tradition was to train the best people for the government and for the church but not for industry, unless of course that was in the family line. As Clark (1983:97) comments 'going to the government was proper, working at the industry was not'.

Between the 12th and the 19th centuries the English universities expand at a slower pace compared to that of French universities. But this is not the only characteristic that sets the two higher education systems on different paths. Universities in England remain independent from the central government unlike the French HE that inherits the Napoléonic model. It is true that the central government in England keeps a hand in regulating provision through Royal Charters by 'her especial grace, certain knowledge and mere motion'. But all academic decisions will be normally taken by academic bodies or on their advice

²⁹ www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation/history?wssi=1

³⁰ www.cam.ac.uk/about-the-university/history/early-records

(Moodie, 2012:827). Clark (1983) explains that the Anglo-saxon tradition of higher education glorified liberal education; blended research and teaching in the professional role of its teachers; distributed authority at the lower and the middle levels through trusteeship and collegial academic bodies hence providing equal opportunities for all instructors to discuss and vote over issues of concern. This is obviously different from the highly centralised French system that concentrated on re-producing elites through professional training in its grandes écoles.

Eventually, the English universities experienced a tangible expansion in their number and a shift in their roles in the 19th and the 20th centuries. The industrial revolution created a need for skilled labour that could not be ignored and thus a series of universities- generally known as the Red Brick universities- were established with local and industrial funds between 1850 and 1889, e.g., University of Leeds for the textile industry. Hence, the role of the universities shifts from institutions with monopoly over the training of the political elite to that of national assets in the training of the labour force required for the industrial and economic growth of the country. Later in the 19th century, Newman (1852) describes universities as more than instruments to the industry and as institutions with wider responsibility 'to cultivate the public mind and raise the intellectual tone of society'.

There is an interesting point to note with regards to the expansion of English universities and colleges. While in France it is the State that develops the parallel system of grandes écoles as a way of maintaining its authority, in England the higher education system grows alongside the society. The English universities, polytechnics, and colleges emerged in certain locations under the authority of local councils based on 'uncoordinated initiatives of different interest groups' (Neave & Clark, 1992) and the subjects taught kept changing in response to the local needs. One could claim that the binary divide between Oxbridge and the red bricks was an 'early sign of limited confidence in new self-governing universities' (Moodie, 2012:833) just like the French State mistrusted the universities.

Consequently, the English higher education did not form a coherent centralised system like that of France. This is clearly pointed out in the 1963 Robbins report: 'Even today it would be a misnomer to speak of a system of higher education in this country, if by system is meant a consciously coordinated organisation', (Article 14). The central government would make sporadic attempts to regulate this 'system', but as will be observed it takes a few more decades and the rise of neoliberalism to make the English higher education yield to the central power. In fact, the logic of decentralised and autonomous HEIs remained strong enough to secure public funding and to resist governmental criticism although the HEIs did not form a coherent system. Of course this was during the time when the 'welfare State' arguments made common sense. The 'truth' at the time was that the State was gaining with each student graduating from higher education and thus it was only normal for the State to invest in higher education through public funding.

While these arguments were accepted, they gave rise to a notion of central planning that was not practised by the government before this period. The central government needed an instrument: a) to keep its steering power over the increasing number of universities and b) to deal with the financial needs of these independent institutions without being accused of interference. Subsequently, the University Grants Committee (UGC) was established in 1919. As a buffer between the State and the academia, the UGC was tasked with the following: 'Consult with universities and reflect their financial needs to the government (advisory role); Receive governmental 'block grants' from the Treasury and independently distribute it among universities (distributary role); and to collect and publish information about the universities (transparency role)', (Neave & Clark, 1992 Moodie, 2012). The UGC helped the State in keeping the universities at arm's length between WWI and WWII but more importantly it safeguarded the autonomy of universities as it left the responsibility of spending public funds to the internal wisdom of the academia.

Then came the famous Robbins Report of 1963. The Report emphasised the importance of public funding for further expansion of institutions and the development of individual capacities. Although the topic of quality is at best a

peripheral concern in the report, it does talk about 'quality of provision' which has no equivalent in French HE policies of the same period, as was discussed in the previous section. The Report demanded universities to produce 'as much high excellence as possible [and to] safeguard standards' setting 'the tone and pace for other institutions...fostering intellectual excellence' (Article 40). The Committee did not, however, propose any directive on how universities should maintain excellence in their provision and delivery because they believed in universities' academic freedom and knew that 'great pains have been taken to see that this position of financial dependence should not impair their legitimate rights of self-government' (Article 15).

The legacy of the Report is due to the fact that by questioning whether a British HE system really existed, It set the foundations for a unitary system and thus became 'the blueprint for Britain's modern system of higher education' (Takayama, 2010:36). Several developments followed the Robbins Report. One is that the traditional funding relationship through UGC was maintained until 1989 when two new funding councils were created for polytechnics (PCFC) and for Universities (UFC). Unlike UGC, these Councils were formal legal corporations 'with power to make, or not to make, payments and to attach conditions to them' (Neave & Clark, 1992:768). Another steering instrument in the hands of the central government was the Department of Education and Science (DES) that was created right after the Robbins Report in 1964.

Under Ms. Thatcher's government that applied neoliberal market rules to all public services including HE, the power relations between the State and the universities altered. The change arrived slowly but surely as the Conservative government (1979-1997) planned to take the upper hand in its struggle with inexorable universities. For instance, the pillars of the first assessment of research based on which universities could receive funding were established in 1989 by the UFC. In 1992, HEFCE inherited this exercise and administered it under the title 'Research Assessment Exercise' (RAE). In 2008, HEFCE announced its intentions to update RAE and following consultations with stakeholders such as UUK the exercise was reframed as 'Research Excellence Framework' (REF) in 2014. This is only an example of a new regime of truth

formed under neoliberal common-sense arguments including: the need for common regulations in a rapidly expanding higher education system and the role that the HEIs were to play in the fast-growing international markets.

The need for a common system of shared standards led to the creation of the first Committee of Chancellors and Principals (CVCP-now known as Universities UK-UUK) in 1983 with the mission to establish Academic Standards for universities. In 1986, the Committee proposed three formal codes of practice on external examiners, postgraduate training and research, and research degree examination, as Brown (2011b:36) explains. The DES was doubtful about the extent the universities actually implemented these guidelines. As a result, the second CVCP that was established in 1989 recommended the establishment of an Academic Audit Unit (AAU) to extend the validation, accreditation, and quality audit activities of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) in polytechnics and colleges to universities.

The establishment of the AAU could be interpreted- although this was not its initial intention- as a step towards creating a unitary higher education system which would be easier to control. To briefly explain my point: The 'parallel running' of two audit systems proved to be an 'unwelcome precedent' due to the 'costs and resourcing implications of the new regime' (Brown, 2011b:41). And therefore, the White Paper of 6 May 1991 clearly stated that the government was willing to consider the opinion of some of the universities' and polytechnics' representatives to create a unitary audit system merging the CNAA and the AAU to ensure effectiveness of regulations and quality assurance across all higher education institutions in the United Kingdom (DES, 1991: 26-27). For a unitary audit unit to operate across all institutions, a logical next step was 'breaking down the increasingly artificial and unhelpful barriers between the universities, and the polytechnics and colleges' (DES White Paper, 1991:12) and creating a unitary higher education system.

This meant: a) creating a single funding structure for all institutions (merging the Polytechnics and Universities Funding Councils); and, b) dismantling the CNAA and paving the way for the creation of a new system of QA

for all institutions. And the argument for a new quality regime sounded reasonable and necessary because it was presented as a way to protect quality while the system expanded and as local and international competition intensified. Brown (2011b:39) asserts that this provided the basic rationale for the assessment of HEIs.

2.5.2. The post-1992 era: the beginnings of quality enhancement

In 1992, two documents set the English higher education on a new trajectory: The White Paper *Higher Education: A new Framework* and the 1992 Higher and Further Education Act. As Ratcliffe (2017) explains, the divide between the polytechnics and the universities was already blurred with the former offering undergraduate and research degrees and the latter delivering more vocational degrees. This reinforced the efforts of the State and thus through the 1992 Act the binary divide was ended and ‘a newly formed Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC, 1992-1997) was given responsibility for QE, while the Funding Council for England had responsibility for QA’ (Gosling, 2014:66). Interestingly, none of the documents provided a definition of quality or of QA, apparently because there was a confusion in the minds of civil servants and ministers about the whole topic. As Williams (2010:7) explains, what was clear was ‘a desire to subject universities to some form of external inspection. Was the chief motivation, indeed, hostility towards the universities because of their lack of accountability? It seems likely.’

By 1997 when the labour majority government of Tony Blair took over, the ‘quality war’ was already declared. The government considered QA as a stimulus sharpening the competitive edge of the universities, while the institutions still favoured academic self-regulation and strongly opposed the new arrangements. Brennan & Bellingham (2013:2) confirm that ‘in many ways, it was seen by some as a ‘war’ about power as much as it was a ‘war’ about process’.

To reconcile universities and the government, the Dearing Report³¹ pointed out the costly and redundant processes of the Teaching Quality Assessments (TQA) conducted by the Funding Council and the quality audits and quality enhancement analysis conducted by the HEQC. It questioned the utility of such a parallel system 'as institutions 'learn' how to achieve high ratings' (Dearing Report, 1997:158). As a remedy, the Report recommended to gather the parallel processes of subject review and institutional audit under a single Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) with three main functions: 'quality assurance and public information; standards verification; the maintenance of the qualifications framework' (Dearing report, 1997:161, article 10.83). Thus, the creation of QAA, according to Brown (2010:136) was a compromise between the universities' and the government's view as to how quality is best protected, but it was a compromise 'born of exhaustion rather than conviction or resolution' (ibid).

There are certain interesting facts about QAA that can help better clarify the steering role of the government. QAA is independent from the government but there has been a 'clear expectation' as to the role and activities of the agency in response to government priorities (Harvey, 2002; Owen, 2014); however, its officials are not nominated by the government as is the case with the quality agencies in France. QAA acts as a bureaucratic instrument that normalises the 'soft power'³² of the government through its Code of Practice. The universities and the Agency's collaboration in QA processes is reminiscent of the definition of soft power by Nye (2004) who suggested 'power with others can be more effective than power over others'.

The role of QAA is significant but limited. The Agency conducts periodic reviews in six-year cycles verifying the procedures and systems used in institutions to ensure the quality of their awards. As Jackson (2010:79) explains: 'One of the objectives for the audit and review activities undertaken by QAA is to contribute to the promotion and enhancement of high-quality teaching and learning'. Ever since 2001 and the disenchantment of universities over subject-

³¹ The full text of Dearing Report is available at:

<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/dearing1997/dearing1997.html>

³² In a most recent publication by University of Southern California Centre for Public Diplomacy and Portland Consultancy firm called 'The Soft Power 30: A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2017', the UK government occupies the second place following France in its use of soft power mechanisms.

review processes, the audit processes 'has been decided by the controlling authority of an ad hoc group comprising the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE), UUK, and GuildHE (the latter two bodies together representing the institution's' interests) with a government observer to keep a close eye on what is going on and give a nudge when deemed necessary' (Williams, 2010:10). The real power lies in the hands of the government (through HEFCE and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS³³); the Funding Councils; and the HEIs.

2.5.3. Recent Developments under the coalition government: the shift towards risk management

In the current quality regime in England, all HE actors are expected to ensure the quality of students' experiences. In fact, the 'idea of central regulation under the auspices of the State remains intact' (Filippakou et al. 2012:114) while a move 'from higher education funding to higher education regulation' is practised (Black et al., 2015:17).

The role of students in QA mechanism has been emphasised since 2010 and following the increase of students' fees recommended by the Browne Report (2010). Holmwood (2011) claims, 'The Government White Paper on Higher Education makes frequent reference to excellence of UK higher education, but proposes measures that will dismantle it...as they turn their back on the very significant social, political and cultural benefits that universities provide'. The BIS 2011 White Paper '*Students at the Heart of the System*' reiterates the importance of students' experiences and satisfaction and proposes a genuinely risk-based approach to the regulation of universities. 'In many ways, the 2011 white paper has built on: a new emphasis on the centrality of the student experience; a need to ensure better public information about higher education; and a closer engagement with the 'public interest' (HEPI Occasional Report 6, 2013:1).

³³ The BIS was created in 2009 as a merger of Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Department for Business, enterprise and regulatory reforms, (BERR). The DIUS was, in fact, the first governmental department created in 2007 responsible for HE.

The risk-based approach to quality is nothing new in the UK HE, it has only taken new turns. As Raban (2014:88) explains the trend started more than ten years before the 2010 White Paper and when the Funding Council adopted risk-based financial regulations in judging the performance of universities. The purpose of risk-based approach 'has not been to reduce but to re-focus accountability of institutions' and to push for the forces of competition to replace the burdens of bureaucracy in driving up the quality of the academic experience' (Raban, 2014:93). A risk-based approach would permit 'a more diverse, dynamic, and responsive' (BIS, 2011:3) HE system providing a basis for tailored external reviews by QAA based on the 'individual circumstances' of each provider (HEFCE, 2012:3-5). Although risk remains undefined, there is an understanding that the risk-based approach will provide QAA and HEFCE with a basis to deal with universities differently.

More recently and in conformity with this risk-based approach, several new initiatives have been adopted. For instance, HEFCE announced a comprehensive review of the existing QA arrangements of universities in May 2015' (Boggs, 2016). The Council has also previously created a public website on Key Information Sets (KIS) including NSS³⁴ data on the nature of learning experiences (Eggins, 2014). In the same vein, in 2015 the government introduced the '*Teaching Excellence Framework*' to mirror the existing REF and to help promote the significance of teaching on an equal ground with research. In 2016, QAA revised the operating model of quality assessments and BIS published another White Paper '*Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Students' Choice*' proposing to 'designate a higher education quality body, which will gain statutory authority to design and operate quality assessment' (ENQA website, 2017).

The very latest developments in quality policy lean towards further students' engagement and an emphasis on teaching excellence at the subject-level. To this end, the Higher Education and Research Act (HERA-2017) clearly proposes a new regulatory body 'the Office for Students' and considers QAA to

³⁴ National Student Survey originally initiated in 2005 and has been conducted by Ipsos MORI on an annual basis.

be one among other independent quality bodies that will collaborate with this new Office and apply for HEFCE tenders to ensure quality of Standards and good academic experience. Furthermore, HEFCE is running a 'Teaching Excellence Framework Assessment at Subject-level' from Autumn 2017 to Spring 2018³⁵.

2.6. Conclusion

The quality mechanisms in higher education have become sites of power struggle in both France and England. While the French universities are gradually granted some autonomy, they still operate in a highly centralised higher education system controlled by the State and its instruments like Hcéres. The English universities have safeguarded their historical autonomy but are subject to an increasing central regulation with more power given to students' voices. The quality system in France was developed quite late (2006) and has ever since changed sluggishly mainly through governmental decrees that are whittled down as they pass through the bureaucratic rigidities of the system. In England, during the last three decades, the quality system has provoked much negotiation and debates and has grown to be 'one of the most elaborate institutional and control mechanisms in the world' (Brown, 2010).

The two quality agencies (QAA and Hcéres) are registered in the ENQR and follow a similar pattern of institutional audit in cycles of 6 and 5 years, respectively. Both are independent and have an advisory role but QAA occupies a more significant place in the quality game compared to Hcéres as it will be further discussed in Chapter 5. In their local quality panopticon, the role of QAA has been altered and reduced due to power exercised by the HEIs and other academic bodies such as UUK, Guild HE, and HEPI, for instance. The role of Hcéres in France has been kept minimal as the political elite, i.e., the Ministries and the grandes écoles have maintained their power in steering the HE.

There are some general traits that define the higher education in the two nations. Elitism is one example. It has survived through 'selective' universities: grandes écoles in France and Oxbridge in England allowing the reproduction of

³⁵ <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2017/Name,114768,en.html>

'la noblesse d'Etat' as Bourdieu (1989) explains. Additionally, both HE systems have yielded to the primacy of neoliberalism and have adopted EHEA's QA policies; but, as it was explained in this review, their national QA systems have been developed based on essentially different epistemological justifications and history.

Therefore, it would be unwise to make cross-national comparisons based on these similarities. For instance, transparency and communication have guided the English quality policy model while the French have remained loyal to their ancient belief 'vivons cachés, vivons heureux'- live hidden, live happy'- in their quality models and reports. Thus, as a comparativist, without empirical evidence, I will be in danger of giving way to my 'penchant for unexplained homologies, inexplicable correspondences and would-be self-explanatory parallelisms' (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977:188). To avoid this, the data analysis and discussion chapter will further delineate the quality discourses, policies, and practices in both cases. Prior to that, the next two chapters will explain the methodology and the conceptual framework adopted in this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY & METHODS

3.1. Introduction

The choice of methodology, methods, and epistemology adopted in this study are informed by the overall aim of the study and its research questions. The study aims to delineate mechanisms of power that construct 'quality' in HE of England and France. It also aims to analyse the impact of these local perceptions on the daily practice of academics in the two selected institutions (ScPo Paris and the LSE).

Congruent with the aims of the study, I have adopted a social constructivist epistemology and a qualitative case study design. The methods used to collect data blended semi-structured interviews and desk research. This permitted triangulation of data and facilitated a more reliable and valid picture of the realities of the two cases. As Krug (2011) emphasised, data triangulation is a favourable method because it helps to see a problem from different angles and aims at corroborating the phenomenon under study. The data from the semi-structured interviews and the desk research was analysed using a Foucauldian discourse analysis which facilitated a genealogy of political, cultural, and power relations that construct local perceptions of quality. The outcome of the data analysis was then discussed to answer the three research questions of the study.

In this chapter, I will discuss the rationale behind the above-mentioned choices and why they best fit the purposes of this study. I will also provide a detailed account of the processes of data collection and analysis.

3.2. Methodology

Among the three major approaches to social research, interpretative social science (ISS) accentuates socially constructed meaning and value relativism that best corresponds to the aims of this study. The origins of the ISS can be traced back to the German sociologist, Max Weber (1864-1920) and the German philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911).

As neo-Kantians and proponents of anti-positivist methodologies, both Weber and Dilthey argued for the study of social action through interpretative rather than the positivist empiricist approach used in natural sciences. Unlike Durkheim, Weber believed in multiple causes- and not in monocausality- for any social action the understanding of which called for systematic and interpretative methodologies. Likewise, Dilthey believed that while the aim of natural sciences was to arrive at law-based causal explanations, the main task of social sciences was to understand the organisational structures of historical and human life.

Two of Dilthey's philosophical concepts are relevant to the purposes of this study. These include his idea of '*cultural systems*' and '*external organisation of society*'. The cultural system, in this study, alludes to the political or economic power networks that go beyond national borders and people voluntarily join them for political, economic, scientific reasons. An example is the European countries joining the Bologna process and creating the EHEA. Another example is the neoliberal worldviews that have motivated the French bourgeoisie to maintain their 'reinvention capacity' (Gordon, 2004) through a proliferation of the number of management and commercial grandes écoles. Both EHEA and neoliberalism are, therefore, cultural systems.

By contrast, the external organisation of society refers to institutions like the family or the State that we are born into. In this study, the external organisation of society manifests itself in established networks of power and knowledge, i.e., the social class, the universities, the grande écoles, the States and their legal and political institutions. These act as *priori* conditions to reserve the hegemony of the elite over others as a justified pure reason independent from experience in a Kantian ontology. Dilthey claims "enduring causes bind the wills of many into a single whole" (1883/SW.I, 94) within which relations of power, dependence, and property can be established³⁶.

Drawing on Dilthey's idea of *verstehen*, Weber proposed an empathetic understanding of social action and the impact of structure on it. The concept of *Eklärendes Verstehen* entails an empathetic understanding of the 'everyday lived

³⁶ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dilthey/>

experience of people in specific historical setting' (Neuman, 2011:87). As opposed to *Aktuelles Verstehen* or direct observational understanding, Weber argued for an understanding of the reasons and motivations that inform people's thoughts and decisions and therefore their actions. He asserted: 'we shall speak of 'social action' wherever human action is subjectively related in meaning to the behaviour of others... social action is... the primary object of an 'interpretative sociology' (Weber, 1981:159). This epistemology guided my choice of data collection and analysis methods. It helped me go deeper than my initial direct observations and reflections in order to understand the reasons and motivations that constructed quality in the two cases of my study.

Based on the above-mentioned tenets of interpretive sociology, therefore, this study is informed by a social constructivist epistemology. Originally coined by Berger and Luckmann (1966), the basic tenet of this approach relies on the fact that 'people make their own social and cultural worlds at the same time these worlds make them' (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). Since reality 'is a product of social processes...created in particular places and under specific historical circumstances' (Neuman, 2011:89) a positivist or an essentialist approach that project a fixed meaning onto reality was not well-suited for my study. On the contrary, the social constructivist approach allowed me to explore 'quality' as it is framed and perceived in each society and by the ensemble of individuals interviewed during a fixed historical period of time when this study was conducted.

My choice is, in fact, informed by an eclectic reading of concepts and theories in sociology. In accordance with Foucault's concept of knowledge and power (1972), within any society, there exist 'regimes of truth' and mechanisms for the reproduction of that 'truth'. The truth is usually established through continuous discursive practices of a distinct group of individuals and their diffusion apparatuses and institutions that result in a Durkheimian 'collective conscious'. In fact, society acts as an external force as it brings about the need to conform and it acts as an internal force because its norms and values are already formed in the collective consciousness of individuals. The discursive field is formed and dismantled based on political and economic priorities of the time

and is thus characterised by temporality and spatiality. For instance, as a child during the Iran-Iraq war we were taught to associate tulip with martyrdom, patriotism, and blood. This was our reality. However, I am sure none of the Iranians born after the war have a similar understanding of tulip, and neither do I today.

Hence, by adopting a social constructivist epistemology I am assuming the following: I understand that knowledge is subjective and reality is fluid and changing. This entails that knowledge is socially constructed by technologies of power and is sustained through signs and norms shared among members of a cultural system. This collective conscious assumes that truth is singular and normalises this particular reading of truth through 'surveillance and monitoring which.... are reinforced by legal structures' (Grbich, 2007:147).

This perspective also implies that this study offers subjective knowledge jointly constructed- by the sample of participants and myself- through our interactions within a certain frame of time and space. This has several implications. I realise that the interpretation of the data could be affected by my identity and life experiences despite my efforts to assume a reflexive position. And that my own subjectivity has been constructed through interactions with the researched sample and the literature.

Additionally, identities and positions of the selected sample of participants as well as the choice of cases, i.e., the LSE and Sciences Po may have had an impact on the outcomes and findings of this study. As elite institutions, the selected cases may not reflect the wider and the more generally applied quality policies across universities; additionally, the data obtained from the small sample of part-time academics in both cases may potentially have affected the outcomes of the study. In other words, had this study used other universities as cases and a larger sample of interviewees, the findings of the study could have been different. The current findings are social constructions of the sample institutions and individuals interviewed and may not be taken as a representation of the higher education systems in France and England.

3.3. Design

A qualitative multiple-case study design is adopted which is compatible with the social constructivist perspective of the study as explained below.

Within the same logic and in order to explore the social construction of 'quality', this study is a qualitative- and not a quantitative- social research. The qualitative approach could best provide the flexibility necessary for understanding the collective perceptions that construct quality in each case. Had I remained attached to my personal experience and generalized this understanding, then my analysis could have suffered from bias and a limited viewpoint. As Robson (2009) explains, when a researcher brings assumptions and preconceptions it affects the way they behave in the research setting. For instance, during the interviews this impacts the kind of questions they ask and diverges their data selection, reporting, and analysis processes. I certainly wanted to avoid such a bias. Thus, it was through a flexible qualitative design that I could help develop an understanding of the societal and individual versions of reality from the perspective of the respondents.

In conformity with the social constructivist epistemology, and the flexible qualitative design of the study, I chose a multiple case-study design.

Why a case study? Simply because I aimed to 'investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence' (Yin, 2009:18). The central idea was to investigate quality as constructed, reproduced, and practised in real life contexts in France and England using preliminary observations, literature review, policy documents, legal and institutional texts, and individual interviews. As such, a qualitative case study design allowed employing multiple methods and facilitated triangulation of data. As Robson (2009) asserts, multiple methods of data collection can help addressing different but complementary questions about a phenomenon therefore increasing the validity of the research.

I selected two national cases (France and England) and within each case

one sample higher education institution, i.e., ScPo Paris and the LSE. The choice of institutions was based on the following considerations. Congruent with the purposes of research in an EdD programme, this study was to provide the opportunity to examine educational institutions with which I had a close association. This meant selecting ScPo Paris as the French institutional case since I was working there at the time of data collection for this study. I, then had to select an institutional case that could be the closest equivalent to ScPo Paris. From both my teaching experience at ScPo Paris and reading the mission documents and the literature, the LSE, as an established University specialising in the Social Sciences, seemed to be the best choice.

Why a multiple case study rather than a single case study? The study could very well focus on one case, either France or England and still be presentable as an EdD thesis. However, the advantage of a multiple case study was that 'more rigorous analytic conclusions could be derived from a multiple-case study compared to a single case study', (Yin, 2009:53). As a comparative research, this study could, therefore, delineate the power relations that are at play in the construction of the quality panopticon in each case; it can also facilitate a new insight into the underlying worldviews that make the two cases similar or different as part of the larger EHEA.

3.4. Methods of data collection

In this part I will explain the methods that were used to collect and analyse the data. The data was collected drawing on primary and secondary sources and was analysed using a Foucauldian discourse analysis.

3.4.1. Primary sources of data collection

Primary sources are those documents that provide a first-hand evidence about the topic of research, i.e., quality. These include: government documents, Acts, Laws and White Papers, quality codes, institutional external evaluation reports, internal quality frameworks and their mission statements. They provide

evidence of the activities, priorities, definitions, debates, functions, and policies that shape and construct quality at national and institutional levels. Furthermore, first-hand evidence about how quality is perceived and enacted can be retrieved from individual interviews that I conducted for this study. The interviews allowed me to investigate ‘varieties of human experience’ (Steiner, 2006:481) and helped me unfold the meaning of the interviewees’ lived experiences.

3.4.1.1. Primary documents: individual interviews

A total of twenty interviews were conducted including ten interviews in each case. The interviews were semi-structured which meant that I had some predetermined questions in mind that I adjusted according to the interviewees’ position and professional function. The semi-structured interviews allowed omitting or adding certain questions that seemed more appropriate in each occasion. Each interview lasted for approximately one hour including the greetings and the wrap-up hence adding up to 20:01 hours. Ten interviews were conducted face-to-face in France and in the French language; the others were conducted online through SKYPE and in English as detailed below:

- Four interviews were conducted with officials in the national quality agencies in England (QAA) and France (Hcéres), i.e., two interviews in each quality agency;
- Four interviews were conducted with universities’ quality managers and directors of departments or campus, i.e., two at ScPo and two at the LSE;
- Twelve interviews were conducted with academics at ScPo and the LSE, that is six interviews in each case. To understand whether full-time senior and part-time junior academics differed in their perceptions of institutional quality mechanisms, I conducted three interviews with senior academics and three interviews with junior academics in each institution.

3.4.1.2. Primary documents: national and institutional

The semi-structured interviews allowed an accumulation of in-depth information on the subject of inquiry. To complement this information, I also used other sources of information including governmental HE policies, quality agencies' codes, and the selected universities' strategies and audit reports. These documents permitted:

a) an understanding of the general worldviews of quality set forth by the political elite and their legal and institutional instruments. The analysis of the discourse in these main documents helped me answer the first and the second research questions of this study;

b) an understanding of academics' experiences in the light of national and institutional definitions of quality. This facilitated responding the third research question.

There exists a wide number of governmental HE policies in each case and I had to choose from among them. To this end, two factors were essential in creating the short list of documents: the research questions and the timeline of the study. Tables 3 and 4 below show the list of selected national documents in the case of France and England, respectively. These documents were used to answer the first research question. As can be observed, the selection of documents follows the same time logic that was used to present the literature review.

Table 3: Selected national documents for analysis: the case of France	
Pre-1968	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edgar Faure 1968 law
Post-1968-2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savary law • The 2006 LOLF law • The 2006 AERES • The 2007 LRU • The 2013 ESR law
2012-2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2014 Hcéres law • The 2015 HE Finance law • The 2017 White Paper • Hcéres Strategic Plan 2016-2020

Table 4 Selected national documents for analysis: the case of England	
Pre-1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Robbins Report
Post-1992-2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 1992 ACT • The Dearing Report 1997 • The 2003 White Paper: The Future of HE • The 2004 White Paper: Equipping our Teachers for the Future • The 2010 Browne report • The 2011 White Paper: Students at the heart of the System
2010-2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DES 2016 White Paper Success as a Knowledge Economy • HERA 2017 • QAA 2017-2020

There are two reasons why there are more documents in the post-1990s parts of both tables: 1) the focus of the study is on ‘quality’ following the 1999 Bologna Process and the documents that date before this period have been analysed in order to demonstrate the possible shifts in quality trends; 2) as a qualitative case study with a social constructivist approach, it is important to delineate the most recent trends and definitions of ‘quality’ in both cases.

I also read and analysed institutional documents in order to address the second and the third research questions. Table 5 below lists the selected documents in the case of ScPo in France and the LSE in England.

Table 5. List of Institutional documents	
ScPo	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SciencesPo 2022: Document d'orientation stratégique 2. SciencesPo enquête jeunes diplômés promotion 2014 3. Rapport d'évaluation de Sciences Po Paris: AERES (2014)
The LSE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The LSE institutional audit 2006 & 2011 2. The LSE Teaching Quality Assurance and Review Office (TQARO) mission statement 3. The LSE Strategy plan 2015-2020

3.4.2. Secondary Sources

Secondary sources permit further analysis, discussion, and interpretation of the primary sources.

There is an abundance of secondary sources on both topics of higher education and quality, especially in the case of England. Quality in higher education has been delineated from different perspectives and with different aims. The list is long but I can refer to some authors who have focused on defining quality (Harvey and Green, 1993; Harvey, 2006; Van Kemenade, Pupius and Hardjono, 2008); or some who have focused on external quality assurance (Harker, 1995; Danø and Stensaker, 2007). There are also articles and books that focus on audit (Cheng, 2009); national systems in England (Brown, 2011; Drennan, 2001; Turnbull et al., 2008) or in France (Neave 1988 & 2014; Musselin, 2005; Chevaillier, 2013). In contrast, comparative studies- such as Neave (1989 & 2014)- on quality in HE in France and England are not that abundant.

3.5. Data collection

In this section, I will provide a detailed account of the process of data collection including the selection of the participants, the ways I approached and informed them about the topic of the study, how and when the interviews were conducted, transcribed, and translated.

3.6. The participants

To answer the research questions of the study, I approached several individuals in the two quality agencies, ScPo, and the LSE. I aimed to interview four groups of individuals: quality agencies' managers; quality managers and department/campus directors at the selected HEI cases; senior permanent and junior contractual academics.

The differences in the French and English HEIs started manifesting themselves at this stage. It was much easier to understand 'who's who' at the LSE compared to ScPo. This is also noted on page 12 of the AERES 2014 evaluation of ScPo: 'The need for clarification and simplification applies to the internal administrative organization... ScPo self-evaluation report does not present an organizational chart expounding intelligibly the articulation of the various bodies existing within ScPo and making it possible to easily identify the circuits leading to the decision making'. Consequently, the process of locating and contacting participants at the LSE was less of a hassle compared to ScPo where I had local access. Of course the good news was that I was lecturing at ScPo at the time and this facilitated my access to potential interviewees. Nonetheless, it took me almost double the time to find potential participants from among managers and department directors at ScPo.

I knew that academics working in different disciplines could have different ways of understanding quality and this could bear a negative impact on the reliability of the data gathered. To avoid this situation, I selected the same academic department at the LSE and at ScPo.

In the case of the LSE, locating academics of a department required a simple search on their website. I used the available mailing list to send the invitation letters to potential interviewees. I was also assisted by an administrative member of the LSE who helped me with contacting the potential interviewees, particularly the heads of departments and the junior academics. In the case of ScPo, I first had to conduct an informal investigation asking colleagues and some of the administrative personnel to give me a clue about the departments and how I could find a mailing list. Through contacting a senior academic and by attending some of the departmental events as well as website search, I got in contact with other members of the department (both senior and junior academics) and eventually created a mailing list through which I sent out the invitation letters. Eventually, I approached about 20 academics in each university and received six positive responses including from three full-time senior and three part-time junior academics. The academics at ScPo were more available and more interested in the topic of the research, while for the 'time-poor' academics of the LSE the topic seemed redundant.

3.7. The process

The semi-structured interviews were conducted during three months following the thesis review panel meeting (for extract samples of interviews, see appendices 5 & 6). While still exchanging with my supervisors in February and early March 2015 and revising the thesis proposal, I started compiling the lists of potential interviewees in France and England as explained above. In addition to my own search for potential participants, a few of the academics directed me towards some of their colleagues whom they thought would be willing and available to participate in my research. The first interview was conducted on 17 March 2015 in France and the last one was also an interview in France on 26 May 2015 (see appendix 4).

I followed a set of steps for each interview. The first step was to draft the interview invitation letters in French and in English (see appendices 7 & 8). The general information included the aims and the significance of the study, the

research questions, and the methods of data collection. I also assured participants that their anonymity and confidentiality will be respected should they volunteer to take part in my study and that they could leave the process at any time. Before sending the invitation letters, I personalised them based on the individual I was contacting. For instance, the letter for managers in quality agencies included a few lines on the significant role of quality agencies in my research and how the participant was best positioned to provide first-hand information on the topic of my study. While, the letter to academics emphasised their role as practitioners and the fact that their daily experiences of internal quality mechanisms were significant to the purposes of my study. Each letter included the name and the title of the participant, the approximate duration of interviews, and my special thanks and appreciation for the time they allocated to reading the letter and the time they may choose to allocate to my research by volunteering to participate.

The next step included much negotiation and a touch of persuasion. Once a potential participant responded positively the next step was to reply immediately and to propose several one-hour time slots while assuring them that I was completely flexible in arranging my time based on their availability. A few of the interviews were scheduled easily without much negotiation. However, for a majority of participants, I wrote an approximate number of twenty emails to set the date and time, to reschedule because they had new priorities, and to remind them that their participation was a meaningful contribution to my research. Some of the online interviewees cancelled their interviews just a few minutes before the agreed time and emailed me later to set another date. The face-to-face interviews in France went rather smoothly and almost without cancellations- of course I sometimes had to wait in front of participants' offices for 45 minutes or an hour until they could be available for the interview.

The procedure during the online and the face-to-face interviews were similar. At the start of each interview, I thanked the interviewees for their participation. I then asked the participants' permission to record our conversation and started recording once they agreed. The SKYPE interviews were recorded using both a camera and an audio recorder to make sure every word was properly

recorded. The face-to-face interviews were audio recorded only. I opened the discussion by a short reminder of the aims of the study and then used a first probe to let them initiate the conversation. For the SKYPE interviews, I logged into my account at least 15 minutes prior to the agreed time I checked the quality of the connection and made sure that I had a pen, a few papers, and my probe lists handy. I also made sure that there was the least possibility of disturbance during the interviews. For the face-to-face interviews, I always arrived 20-25 minutes in advance in order to find the interviewee's office and announced my arrival to their assistance or colleagues.

During the interviews, I tried to remain neutral and objective. I used both nonverbal and verbal strategies to maintain a fluid conversation and to obtain as much relevant and accurate information as possible. I also kept noting down the key points mentioned during the interviews and used probes to allow further self-initiated explanations by the interviewees. As Neuman (2011:306) explains, 'a probe is a neutral request to clarify an ambiguous answer, to complete and incomplete answer, or to obtain a relevant response'. I realised that a three to five second pause was an effective strategy during the face-to-face interviews. For all interviews, particularly during the SKYPE interviews, I asked neutral questions such as: 'what do you mean by that', 'can you elaborate your point', 'any other experiences', 'did I get you right' or 'so if I want to rephrase what you just said...'.

Each interview took approximately one hour. At the end, I thanked the participants and later on the same day sent them a thank you email as well.

The next step was to transcribe the interviews. I started the transcription while I was conducting the interviews. Nonetheless, it took about two and a half months after the final interview to finish the transcription. For every one hour of interview, I devoted an approximate of 8 hours to the transcription task. While transcribing, I also consulted the relevant literature and went back and forth between the interview texts and the literature to make sense of participants' discourses. It took me another one and a half months to translate the French texts. In sum, the whole process of interviews, transcription, and translation took six months.

3.8. Data analysis

This part is an account of the methods I used to analyse the policy discourses and the data obtained from the interviews. I will explain why and how I used a Foucauldian discourse analysis.

3.8.1. A Foucauldian analysis of data

Why a Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA)? Because it best suited the purposes of this study based on the following arguments. As Bernstein (2003:32) asserts, 'language is considered one of the most important means of initiating, synthesizing, and reinforcing ways of thinking, feeling, and behaviour which are functionally related to the social groups' and thus 'language-use facilitates development in a particular direction rather than inhibiting all other possible directions'. In agreement with Bernstein, Foucault (1980) enunciated an inescapable interconnection between knowledge and power and proposed three ways through which power operated in societies. These include: discourse and discursive practices (Foucault, 1972); disciplinary practices and bio-power (Foucault, 1979); and technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988). Foucault defines discourses as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' and as such 'produce frameworks of sense and obviousness with which policy is talked and written about' (Ball, 2006:44).

Therefore, my concern in analysing discourses wasn't with the linguistic sense of language use but with the discursive regularities that constitute and maintain a cartesian dualism between what quality is and is not in the two higher education systems of England and France. By using FDA, I could understand the way quality discourses are formulated and demonstrate: a) the shift in power relations between the States, the universities, and other HE actors; and b) the sanction and reinforcement methods that create incentives for adoption of a particular reading of quality in each case; c) the impacts these bear on the practice of academics.

Based on the tenets of FDA and to answer the research questions of this study, as a first step I focused on:

- what particular arguments or ideas were associated with quality and how they produced meaning and subjectivities,
- Whether there existed a particular quality culture that formed the basis of statements, arguments, and ideas that constructed quality at national and institutional levels
- How quality was presented and pursued and for whose interest (the technologies or logics of power that are implied and produced by the use and choice of sentences)
- What was accepted, rejected, or excluded over time.

I had two types of texts to analyse: the policy texts and the interview texts. In analysing the policy discourses, I mainly looked for 'discontinuity, ruptures, threshold, limits, series, and transformations' (Foucault, 1972:9) that have created a particular quality regime in each of the cases. In analysing interview discourses, I was looking to understand:

- the conceptions of the respondents about the quality of education and the ways they integrated their understanding in their practice;
- their perceptions of external and internal quality mechanism and how policies and practices may differ, e.g. between the grandes écoles and universities in France;
- their perception of QA/QE effectiveness;
- the organisational values that academics regard as preferable and effective;
- their perception of these values in day-to-day practice.
- If quality norms have created a shared culture among academics.

In the next stage, I sought to identify and interpret the discursive construction of quality discourses. I did this by drawing on theories of chaos (Lorenz attractors; Nash equilibrium); psychology (operant conditioning; positive and negative reinforcement; group effect; coping strategies); political economy

(big push; free-rider policy); game theory and coordination; organisational policy and practice; diplomacy and international relations (divide and rule); Marx's capital and means of production; Weber's rational action; Hegel's dialectic; Gramsci's hegemony; Clark's model on authority in higher education; Ball's model of policy cycle; as well as concepts of teacher professionalism; types of internationalisation; and project management, among others.

The next stage involved understanding the relation and the position of these discourses within the wider socio-cultural and historical moments that had constructed HE and its quality systems-which I have already explored in the literature review. This helped me analyse and map the possibilities of action as well as the relationship between discourses and subjectivities. I, then, simply had to present and report the findings in an orderly manner under each RQ.

Prior to presenting the findings, the next chapter discusses the conceptual framework adopted for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. Introduction

This chapter depicts the conceptual framework adopted in this study. It explains the main concept and outlines my subjective perspective of it. The conceptual framework presented here is developed based on Foucault's panopticon model. It draws on and modifies Burton Clark's triangle of coordination (1983) and Stephen Ball's policy cycle (1992) to create the panopticon model that suits the purposes of this study and one that reflects the current multi-actor governance of HE quality systems in the two cases.

4.2. Panopticon: Foucault's portrayal of power

The main concept of this study is the panopticon. It is the way I have looked at quality in higher education. I tried understanding if and how and by whom the quality panopticon has been constructed in England and France and if the outcomes of this study could eventually agree, critique, or even modify Foucault's portrayal of panopticon.

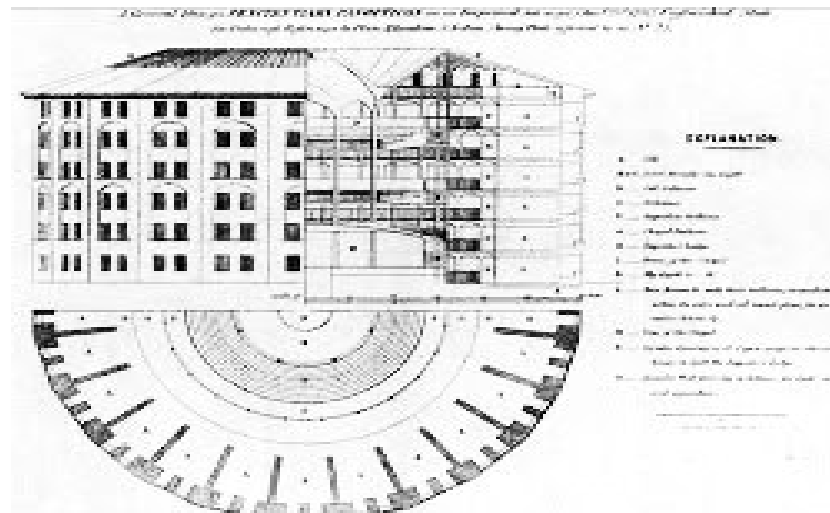


Figure 3: Jeremy Bentham, "A General Idea of a Penitentiary Panopticon" (1787).

The physical design of a panopticon, as seen in the above Figure 3, includes a circular watchtower in the middle of a larger circle of cells with transparent walls and doors that are completely opaque from the outside. The inmates either are or assume they are under constant surveillance by the other

inmates and the watchtower and therefore by internalising the regulations become their own police.

The reason I used panopticon in my thesis is that quality systems use similar power techniques of visibility, transparency, surveillance, and permanent registration to reward and punish and to normalise a series of individual and institutional behaviours in higher education so that self-regulation ensures external power redundant.



Figure 4: an inside view of the panopticon

The panopticon gaze can be reconstructed in any social institution including health or education systems. In his 1975 book 'Discipline and Punishment', Foucault takes the example of the plague-stricken town to explain how the panopticon traverses throughout 'hierarchy, surveillance, observation, writing' to 'induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power'- what he calls the *Biopower*.

The Biopower is one impact of the panopticon 'that *produces* subjectivities which are suited to the world in which techniques and disciplinary practices operate' (Mann, 2008:64). The world created by the panopticon becomes what we take to be 'the truth' and the means by which we establish, judge, and seek the truth. Such *regimes of truth* are bound by the cultural and historical contexts of each panopticon and create *technologies of self* that lead individuals to conduct themselves in ways that comply with the truth created by the panopticon.

There seems to be an undeniable resemblance between the techniques

used in the panopticon and methods used in the plague-stricken city of Foucault and the current quality systems in HE systems. The possibility of the plague striking a town resonates with the ranking systems of higher education. It facilitates the exercise of power by differentiating between 'healthy towns', i.e., the universities on top of the ranking lists from 'plague-stricken towns' or the universities at lower places in the ranking lists. The quality indicators are there to reduce such risks and to immune the HE systems against the plague. To be safe and different, therefore, the universities shall internalise the external quality measures and monitor their own processes and staff. The same logic applies to academics therefore leading to a 'biopower' among practitioners who gradually internalise and adhere to internal quality and audit regulations.

The concept of panopticon is at the basis of conceptual model of the study and can help me analyse whether and to what extent such a panopticon is constructed in the two national and institutional cases through definitions, mechanisms, and discourses of quality and in what ways this panopticon affects the daily practice of academics. To this end, I shall first clarify who is in the watchtower and who observes whom and through what means. In other words, what 'interest groups' constitute 'le regard' or 'the gaze' and how they exercise or negotiate their power in the quality panopticon.

4.3. The conceptual framework: the quality panopticon and its integral parts

This section presents the conceptual framework. I will first introduce the building constituents of the framework and will finally put them all together to present the conceptual framework as a whole. It is important to note that the order by which I have presented the components of the panopticon do not represent the importance of one component over others.

4.4. The norm-setting processes: how they operate

This conceptual framework uses and modifies Stephen Ball's policy cycle (1992). As Fung & Lui (2017:16) explain, his framework shifted away from former

State-centred policy analysis model that was proposed by Dale (1989). Ball's original policy cycle is developed based on a postmodernist, relativist, and micro-oriented approach to educational policy analysis. It is, therefore, 'characterised by less distinct hierarchies' (Vidovich, 2000:3) and attempts to 'distinguish the extent to which practitioners are actively involved in the formation of policy discourses and the active interpretation which occurs to link the policy text to practice' (Vidovich, 2001:7). I have used Ball's cycle to demonstrate the ways quality norms and power are negotiated in the quality panopticon. The original 1992 cycle, as illustrated in Figure 5, included three components: the context of influence, the context of text production, and the context of practice.

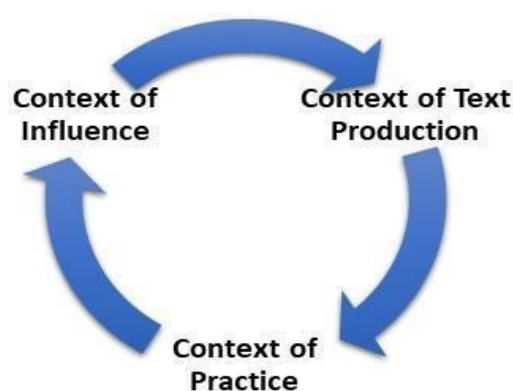


Figure 5: Stephen Ball's policy cycle 1992

I have modified and used Ball's 1992 policy cycle as a component of this study's conceptual framework. I have replaced context of **policy text production** with the context of **policy discourse production**. Ball (1994) made a distinction between 'policy as text' and 'policy as discourse'. The former is based on literary theory and implies agency of actors and the latter draws on Foucault's concept of discourse and reflects the ways 'the texts are discussed as a form of social practice' (Saarinen, 2008:722). I have used '**context of policy discourse production**' in order to include both 'policy as text' and 'policy as discourse' inside the cycle. I understand higher education policies are discourses (oral and texts) that 'at any given time result from the power of a particular social group to implement its ideology' (Lawton, 1992). It is through both oral and text discourses that 'social and political issues are constructed and reflected; power relations are negotiated and performed; social relations are reflected; and reproduced and ideologies are at work in complicated and invisible ways' (Paltridge, 2008:179).

Figure 6 below is the modified cycle that I have used as part of my conceptual framework.

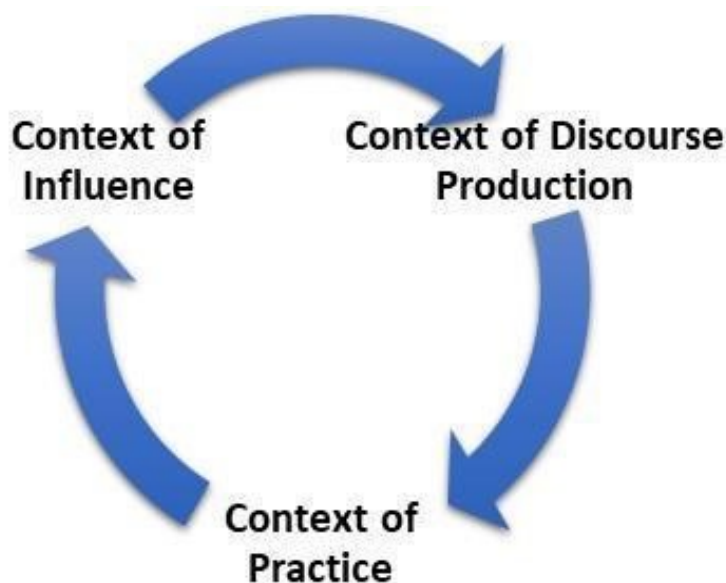


Figure 6.: modification to Ball's policy cycle.

One shortcoming of the above Figure 6 is that it fails to reflect the relation between the external forces such as the EHEA or global initiatives with local quality policies. As discussed in the literature review the global and the regional policies are not readily adopted by the local HE systems (Marginson & Van der Wende, 2007). Nonetheless, local education policies are not produced in a vacuum and are definitely influenced by a variety of commitments, values, and experiences that combine situated, professional, material, and external contexts' (Baun et al. 2011). To reflect this, I have integrated external (global/EU) institutions and policies into my conceptual framework as part of the interest groups.

4.5. The actors in the panopticon: Whose interest? Whose power?

To complete the conceptual framework and demonstrate the other actors in the quality panopticon, I have drawn on and modified Burton Clark's (1983) triangle of coordination as explained below.

Burton Clark's triangle of coordination is to this date one of the most popular conceptual tools addressing the question of authority in higher education systems. As shown in Figure 7, his triangle included three sources of authority: State, the market, and the academic oligarchy and provided a 'heuristic for studying, comparing, and classifying national higher education systems.' (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002:283).

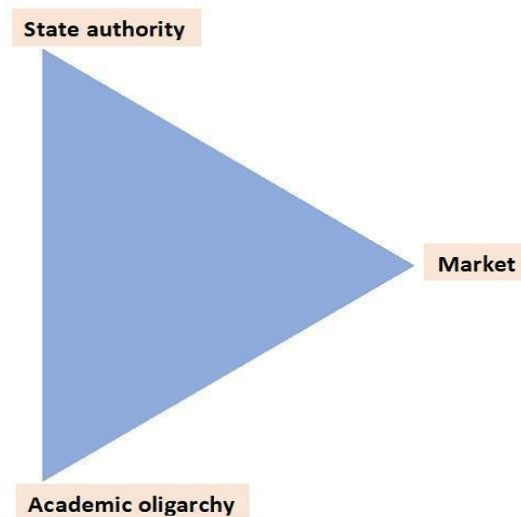


Figure 7: Clark's triangle

As Maggio (2008:3) explains: 'Clark refers to each of these three systems as "ideal" types, presumably to avoid the implication that national systems will typically fall neatly into one classification or another. He situates these systems as the three vertices of the triangle because together they constitute the principal "interest groups". The academic systems are the result of the coordination, interaction, and competition of these interest groups. In fact, his model 'assumes each of these modes of coordination to be at least partially mutually exclusive for one another' therefore, bearing a "zero-sum effect.

Here are my proposed modifications:

1. Clark's triangle does not include global forces that are increasingly significant in how higher education policies and practices are altered. Hazelkorn (2017) has also noted this shortcoming in Clark's model. I have attended to this matter by integrating global/EU discourses and institutions as a source of power, as mentioned before.

2. At the time when Clark was developing his framework, quality agencies and internal managers were not a dominant constituent of higher education systems worldwide. His notion of academic oligarchy referred to academic intermediary bodies, such as University Grant Committee in the UK that distributed public budget among universities in a collegial manner (Ferlie et. al., 2008); or the academic chairs who had the privilege and the power to negotiate different aspects of their institutions with the local government, e.g. in the case of Italy, France, and Germany (Clark, 1983). Ever since Clark, higher education subsystems have become bigger and more strategic. Subsequently, I chose to replace Clark's ***academic oligarchy*** with three components: '***Institutional management***' to refer to individuals with managerial responsibilities in HEIs including deans, campus directors, quality managers, administrators; '***academia***' to refer to professors, lecturers, and any other individual involved in teaching, e.g. assistants; and ***Students*** occupy a separate place as they are gaining more power in HE systems. I have also replaced Clark's '***State authority***' with '***national political bureaucracy***' to include the State and its bureaucratic and political instruments such as QAA in the UK and Hcéres in France, the ministries and their officials.
3. Clark's model is based on coordination among three interest groups which corresponds to my understanding of how different actors in HE systems work to create the quality panopticon. Coordination is not about pulling the components of authority together. It is rather about differentiation. Clark himself (1983:271) noted this fact and stated that dominant pressures in the higher levels take the form of standardisation and evoke integration and adaptation. Hence, coordination differentiates those that can integrate and those that resist change and experience stalemate. Differentiation is also one way that Foucault said power operates and quality systems essentially use such coordination practices. They divide individual practitioners or institutions into 'types', 'hence enabling their inclusion or exclusion either spatially or socially, or both' (Mann, 2008). These 'classifications take on the quality of the 'truth' and obscure their historical

production' (ibid:120). In the panopticon, each of the above-mentioned interest groups have their own watchtowers and share the central watchtower as they coordinate.

4. Another significant concept in Clark's triangle- that was missing in Ball's model- is the **market**. Unlike Clark, I do not think that market is one of the interest groups of the triangle of coordination. It may well have been at the time when he was developing his concept. Market has indeed grown to occupy the background against which the whole system of higher education and their actors operate. All actors of the panopticon are operating based on market rules. The State's mission is to stimulate the strength of the market and prevent and repair its failures. Students act as consumers in higher education markets and institutions adopt market behaviours to attract more fee-paying customers by means of differentiating their quality of service and delivery. Academics are part of the higher education labour market exchanging their teaching hours with an income. They adopt market proper behaviours to differentiate themselves from their colleagues and compete to gain local and European grants. Likewise, the European council has used market incentives to create EHEA to harmonize and increase the competitiveness of the European higher education systems and it maintains its power in the research market through funding. Therefore, in the conceptual framework of the study, all three sides of the triangle of coordination are driven by market incentives.

Figure.8 below illustrates the conceptual framework of this study.

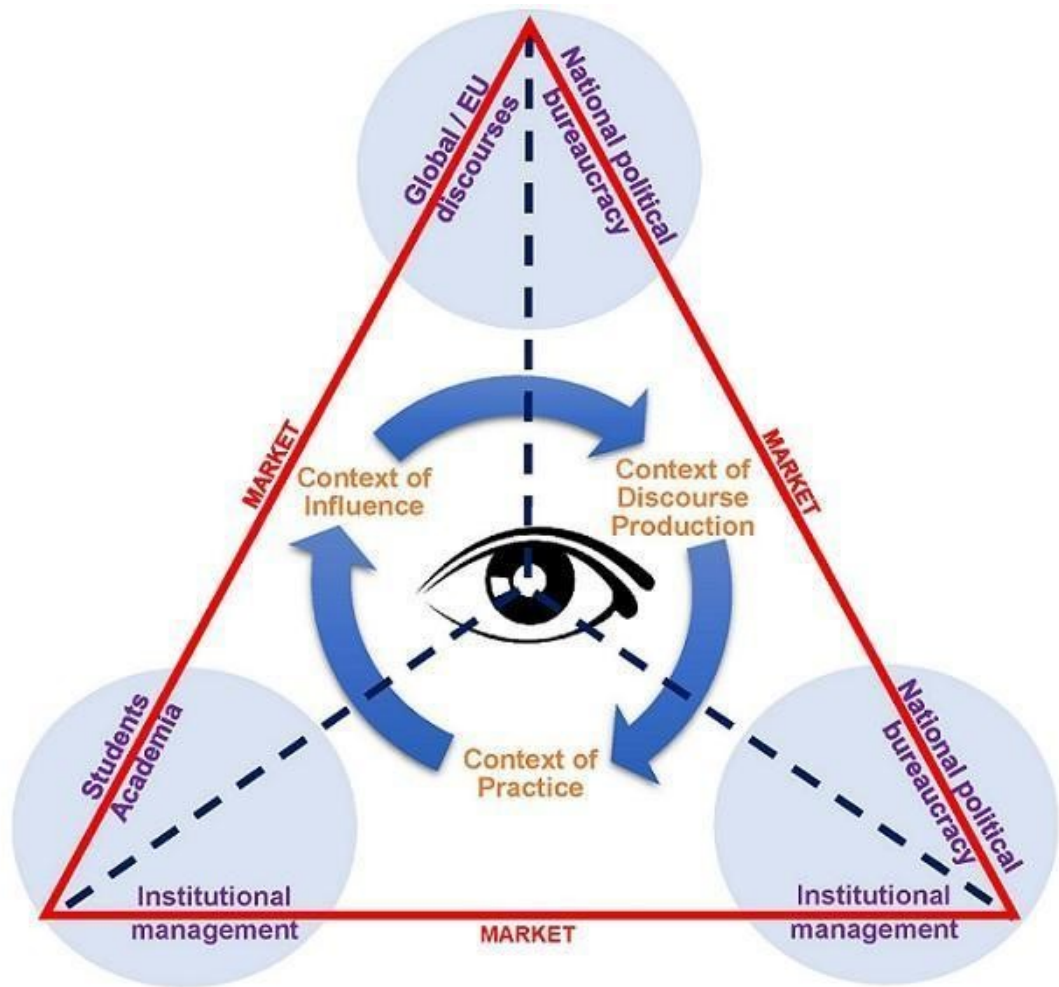


Figure no. 8. The conceptual framework of the study, Juliette Torabian, 2017

As observed in the conceptual framework, the quality panopticon gaze has itself become a distributed watchtower. No one can revolt against the central watchtower because at any given instance, at least two or three actors' can be communicating and coordinating in there. No one actor knows who watches and who is being watched but they all know someone is watching.

All actors struggle to gain more power in the quality panopticon and all have the power to filter or alter the influence of the other. I have shown this filtering or adopting power by using discontinued lines in the middle of each circle of actors. The struggle for power is still a zero-sum game. Each actor has a

certain amount of accumulated knowledge of others. But this information is always asymmetrical. Hence it may not be enough to sanction or omit others but it is enough to reward or punish them for their behaviour within the quality panopticon. The consent over the 'truth' is achieved through 'hegemony' (Gramsci, 1971) of the ideologies of the political elite and as they 'attempt to appropriate the device to impose their *rule* by the construction of particular code modalities' (Bernstein, 1996:193 quoted in Christie and Martin, 2007:20).

This conceptual framework could be reminiscent of a song by 'The Police' (1983) that I used to listen to as a young teenager:

*Every breath you take,
Every move you make,
Every bond you break,
Every step you take,
I'll be watching you!
Oh, can't you see, you belong to me!*

The next chapter presents the findings of the study and responds to the research questions.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSES

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the data and findings of the study and answers the research questions. Under each question, the first part delineates the findings in the case of France followed by findings in the case of England respecting the same order in which the literature review was presented.

The findings under RQ1. are based on an analysis of a selected set of policy discourses. When answering RQ2., I have drawn on institutional documents, websites, and audit reports as well as interviews with quality managers and heads of departments at ScPo in France and the LSE in England. And finally, to answer RQ3, I have used the interviews with the permanent and contractual academics in the aforementioned institutions. Each section starts with the relevant RQ and ends with an answer based on the findings of the study.

In accordance with BERA guidelines (2011), I have used a coding scheme to safeguard participants' anonymity. I have used PCT as an abbreviation for participant followed by a number from 1 to 20, for example: PCT 12 or PCT 4. It is important to note that there is no association between the numbers and the identity, the professional status, or the nationality of the interviewees. The numbers are simply used for the sake of clarity and ease of data representation.

5.2. RQ1. How is quality in higher education defined and constructed in the cases of England and France?

This part depicts the findings that facilitate answering the first research question. It attempts to unfold the relations that link actors, instruments, and ideas in regulating quality in France and England. It will help understanding how 'quality' is defined at national level, how these definitions may have changed, and what underlying ideologies have facilitated the construction of the quality panopticon.

5.2.1. 'L'excellence à la française': the actors and ideas defining quality

An analysis of the main HE Acts, Reports, and Bills that have been issued since 1968 reveals several interesting facts regarding the French approach to 'quality'. The main findings include: *the intentional absence of grandes écoles in policy discourses; evaluation used as a euphemism for quality; and autonomy as a steering instrument.*

5.2.2. The phantom of the Opera: The grandes écoles

When as a teenage I read the 1901 book of Gaston Leroux 'The Phantom of the Opera', I never thought I'd actually find a real-life equivalent for it in the French higher education system. To my surprise, the first striking finding of the study is that the HE policy in France knows only one target: *universities*. The grandes écoles are the phantoms of the French HE. By this, I do not mean to say the grandes écoles are excluded from the policy discourses. I am simply pointing out that no HE policy document is exclusively devoted to 'quality' in the grandes écoles while these institutions play a very important role in how 'quality' is perceived. This was affirmed by one of the interviewees:

PCT10: '...again all the things that I just said about the way the government has pushed for quality is in the case of universities.... well the grandes écoles are also evaluated... but...they are different...let's say we focus on universities because the main challenge is there...'

This reflects a historical differentiation between the grandes écoles and the universities in France and how this bears an impact on the practice of the quality agency and its auditors. The French 'truth' associates quality with prestige and these are epitomised in grandes écoles, therefore HE acts and bills mainly target universities. One of the interviewees had an interesting point about the power relations between Hcéres and ScPo:

PCT 10: '...the Agency won't evaluate Sciences Po Paris as it evaluates

other institutions...it is a particular case...I mean if you look from outside you would think the quality is not good because most of their teachers are contractual, the agency's criteria does not match their case...because the contractual teachers at Sciences Po Paris are all well-known professionals and the students are selected too, so the quality is already there...but the Agency would go and evaluate Sciences Po at Lille or another city because they organise joint courses with universities and so these are more of standard courses that the Agency can potentially go and look at...'

This is in line with Gordon's (2004) arguments that after the 1789 revolution and the first Empire, the bourgeoisie reinforced their network in Paris in concordance with the centralisation policy of the State. Not much seems to have changed as the treatment ScPo in Paris receives is different from other ScPo institutions. Another participant referred to the accreditation systems in grandes écoles:

PCT 6: '.... you see quality assurance existed in a very secondary way....it was linked to the creation and accreditation of the écoles.... I am thinking in particular of engineering écoles, business écoles...you know...they have long been there and they knew what quality meant, they practised it...'

Other participants held similar ideas, for instance one of them said:

PCT 10: '...Well an example is the CTI (Commission des Titres d'ingénieur) ... it was created in 1933 universities have totally discovered quality assurance... And what's even worse, some of them, they still have not discovered it. No, it's obvious, we're not in Britain... The écoles know... they have their own vision, universities are starting to know.'

The above extracts demonstrate another French 'truth' that considers universities as institutions unable to reform themselves just as they weren't centuries ago. To prove this, one participant had an interesting suggestion:

PCT 6: '... I'll give you a challenge, go to 5 or 6 universities, you know randomly, ask them what is the meaning of 'learning objectives'...I challenge you... go there and see if you can find even one university where they have a clear understanding of learning objectives... and I am not even talking about intended or achieved learning outcomes.... it's not even worth going that far...'

you see... we are on planet Mars...these things are clear in other countries... like your other case, England...really... go and see for yourself... this will be a beautiful challenge....so you see quality in French universities is a very complicated task to pursue...'

Garçon (2012) confirms that the difference that exists between universities and grandes écoles has a paralysing impact on the whole system and demonstrates a total lack of confidence in universities and a low self-esteem among universities themselves.

But there are several other reasons why universities are the target of reforms. The number of universities are almost double the number of grandes écoles according to the latest Education Code (13 July 2017)³⁷, there are 142 EPSCP including universities, while there are only 90 EPA including the grandes écoles. Moreover, international rankings target universities and the French experience of the 2003 Shanghai ranking was quite bitter. As Garçon (2012) points out: 'in 2003 we woke up and found that 1.3 million students were macerated in this container whose flow was not renewed'.

The above set of reasons may be legitimate but they aren't convincing. A deeper explanation lies in the historical relation between the State and the grandes écoles as it was discussed in the literature review. Grandes écoles are 'state-building institutions³⁸' that embody 'the creation myth of the national intellectual, social, and political projects, the legacy and promise of scholarly purpose and national advancement' (Ordorika & Pusser, 2007:192). Regardless of being funded and run by the State or the non-State sector, these institutions have 'powerful linkages to historical and contemporary social and intellectual movements' and 'stand as the reification of a particular form of national sovereignty... the symbolic national saga of national pride, opportunity, and development through higher education.' (ibid).

Besides, if the State was to question the educational quality of the grandes écoles by issuing direct Acts and bills, it could risk putting its graduates' capacities under question. This could create a tension inside the bourgeoisie network that

³⁷ <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006071191>

³⁸ Authors state that the notion of 'State-building university' has no equivalent in the English-speaking world.

'has reproduced itself through the grandes écoles even before the 1789 revolution' (Gordon, 2004). Instead, the State has a social contract with the grandes écoles to safeguard these emblems of French excellence and chauvinism. As such, it can maintain its steering power in these legally autonomous institutions through funding and a softer external scrutiny. It may be absurd, but it is an archaic 'truth' from Napoléon's time (1812) that no government questions 'what seems to be at the origin of lack of competitiveness in French industry and the economic slump' (Garçon, 2012).

To be fair, though, a few examples exist where grandes écoles appear in HE policy discourses. But why they appear in the texts is only an affirmation of my above arguments. For instance, a 2008 Report to the Minister³⁹ asserts: 'universities and the grandes écoles are essential components of the knowledge economy...and a forced marriage between them for the sake of the highly questionable benefits of a unified system would be a source of trauma that our country does not really need.... the partnership must be based on a shared project where there is an added value in acting together'. In another occasion is in 2013 when the Minister of the time, Ms. Fioraso proposed that the preparatory classes for the grandes écoles (CPGE)⁴⁰ could collaborate with some universities to allow them select the best students. The presidents of the preparatory classes and universities considered this proposal to be 'without ambition, inspiration, and courage and completely unfit for the 21st century universities...and completely silent when it came to the real problems of budget for universities' (Le Figaro Etudiant, 2013)⁴¹. This proposal was omitted from the ESR law of 2013.

³⁹ Report to the Minister of Higher Education and Research prepared by the Rector of Lyon III University, Mr. Christian Philip: 'What partnership to build between universities and the grandes écoles'.

⁴⁰ The 'classes préparatoire aux grandes écoles' also referred to as 'Prepa' are an important part of the power network in France. These are intensive courses that replace the university curriculum following the baccalauréat and aim to prepare the young high school graduates for the grandes écoles. At the end of this period, students sit for the selective entrance exam of grandes écoles. The Prepa are ranked annually based on their performance.

⁴¹ Une loi pour rapprocher universités et grandes écoles. By Marie-Estelle Pech. (2013).

www.etudiant.lefigaro.fr/les-news/detail/article/une-loi-pour-rapprocher-universites-et-grandes-ecoles-1458

5.2.3. Beware! In the language of Molière, it is called 'evaluation' not 'quality'

Another interesting finding of this study is that the word 'quality' is avoided in almost all discourses (oral and written) and at all times as part of a conscious political strategy of both Left (PS) and Right (LR) wing parties. The word 'quality' is treated as a taboo, a euphemism that shall not appear anywhere in a formal discourse. An interviewee said:

PCT 6: 'we don't talk about quality because immediately everyone thinks that we are going to act like the police and that we are going to deploy sanctions against them...well you know this was all caused by the AERES giving grades (A, B, C, D) to research units that led to people working in those badly noted units lose their jobs...this has marked the spirits and you see even before that quality was a pejorative....'

The word that replaces 'quality' across all legal and policy texts as well as reports is 'evaluation' which is a curious replacement, semantically speaking. One of the interviewees talked about the challenge of conducting internal and external quality assurance because:

PCT 10: 'when you talk of quality assurance, you talk of controlling the quality...they consider this as surveillance...the police...but when you say evaluation it seems more familiar because all academics and universities are used to evaluation...professors evaluate their students...they give their views on one another's' work in their offices...you see?... so, it changes...'

As discussed in the literature review, QA is a term borrowed from the market and the industry. It follows a logic of models like the PDCA to 'identify, analyse and eliminate variations (defects) in processes and outcomes' (Leahy et al. 2009:70). It includes the NPM mechanisms of self-evaluation and quality assurance. What differentiates QA from Evaluation is not their *intent* but the *perspective*. Unlike QA, evaluation does not have market roots, it is part of governmental legislations that promote compliance. It is the kind of activity that was conducted by the CNE or MSTP in France or by the UGC in England. Hence,

'evaluation' creates a '*déjà vu*' situation and reminds the French academia of the '*good old golden years*' when the CNE or MSTP conducted evaluations that did not put their identity and capacities under question as does the new QA systems. Evaluation is less threatening and less aggressive compared to 'quality'- although no euphemism has ever been reported to have changed the reality.

One of the participants talked about the reality of evaluations and the negative reactions that it provoked in HEIs and said:

PCT 6: '... they say that they have to prepare lots of time-consuming and irrelevant documents...putting this in this paragraph...that in that paragraph...as if they have nothing else to do...and then the results come and the presidents of the universities...well some of them did this...they said you are not marked well so goodbye...your unit is closed...'

Of course as Pumain & Dardel⁴² (2014) rightly explain: although the AERES has been fervently criticised for the 'grading' incidents, but it is important to recall that AERES was not at all responsible for the way its grading system was used by the decision-makers'. But as one participant said:

PCT 5: '... we arrived at a stage where no one was even reading the long-winded audit reports, they would just look at the grade and decide...it was horrible...it showed the complete unawareness of people who were reading these reports about the aims and objectives of these reports...'

Nonetheless, the grading system created an exclusion and sanction paranoia and so left a negative impression in academia. Another interviewee confirmed the above comment and continued:

PCT 6. 'You see, this is why even when you look at the law that established Hcéres as the agency for quality assurance, you have to go up and down the text to be able to read between the lines to understand that this institute is supposed to assure quality.... the word quality is avoided at all costs...'

This comment indicates that the French academia resists QA and this is why the State and the institutions adopt soft methods and discourses to avoid

⁴² L'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur', Report to the HE Minister.
https://cache.media.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/file/Actus/98/8/Rapport_Pumain_Dardel_295988.pdf.

clashes. One participant referred to the universities' resistance against external QA mechanism and said:

PCT 6: '...I talked to a university president, she said only three other presidents knew what the ESG was...and if the presidents don't know how can you expect others to know...and so when you talk of the ESG and quality assurance, they look at you and say...what is that 'thing' you said?... that's again your European machine, isn't it?... so, you see, there is much work to be done...'

This perhaps explains why the French HE system seems to be in a perpetual crisis situation: External changes are rejected by the HE system and its people. To manage the situation the French evaluative State has been more flexible and has pushed for 'improvements rather than any real positive or negative sanctions' (Moray, 2010:74). In fact, the State has drawn two conclusions from the rejection and resistance of the HE system. Firstly, it has learnt to avoid imported jargons like QA or performance-based ranking, because:

PCT 7: 'philosophically, France has a view of what higher education is... and that is different from the Anglo-Saxon world...for instance the ranking systems...that is a very Anglo-Saxon approach...we have moved towards this Anglo-Saxon system. it's no secret...but...you must beware of these rankings...it's more a matter of learning how to present your information to be on top of the list...we look at things differently...'

And secondly, it has diluted the QA mechanism in order to maintain its role in the panopticon in a more invisible and distributed way. I will briefly explain my point:

As was mentioned in the literature review, the French HE system has seen three 'evaluating' bodies: The first entity was the CNE (1984-2006), followed by AERES (2006-2013), and finally the Hcéres (2014- now). Their mission included: evaluation of HEIs, Research units, and Teaching. As the time has passed, certain fundamental characteristics have differentiated these evaluation agencies and the general policy of the State. The CNE had a 'reference book' of 32 pages that was published to help the HEIs evaluate their procedures, their potentials, and their outcomes. The AERES was already more aggressive. As Croche (2015) explains the word 'Agency' referred both to the American model and to the

modernisation of the administration. The Agency also had a 'Guide' for evaluation rather than a book of reference. While the evaluations of CNE were collegially conducted and its reports caused little or no contradictions, the new 'Agency' was an external entity imposing vigorous self-evaluations and was publishing publicly accessible audit reports based on a set of predefined indicators. As one of the participants said:

PCT 10: '...in terms of training, the first phase of the agency was to work with the institutions for self-evaluation. Because in France self-evaluation was not something very widespread... It was first of all a matter of record keeping for the department... writing them as well as possible so that the ministry would not be angry. It took four years for institutions to react to self-assessment as they were asked to provide specific documents on self-evaluation, etc. It is a positive point of the AERES to have pushed for a dynamic of self-evaluation, that is to say to really think internally on the teaching and how to improve it by answering a certain number of criteria...'

But following the grading scandals and closure of some research labs during 2008 to 2011- as some of the participants referred to-, AERES was already adopting a new softer approach. As Pierronnet⁴³ (2014) analysed, the 'Guide' for evaluation had 41 pages in 2009-2010; during its last evaluation in 2014-15 (wave E) and before handing over the power to Hcéres its 'guide book' had only 16 pages. The decrease in the number of pages is indicative of a trend of simplification in the number and details of indicators and therefore a move from a detailed quality assurance to a more distant steering through quality enhancement. According to one of the participants:

PCT 6: '... Hcéres has been much more interested in the processes and procedures that institutions have put in place to guarantee quality...they have committees to help them do this...periodic reviews... participation of students in this reflection ... participation of other partners...'

Another participant confirmed that the ESR law (2013) has changed the way the State and the now autonomous HEIs communicate. This has led to a

⁴³ L'AERES adopte un nouveau référentiel d'évaluation des établissements, 10 Feb 2014. Educpros blog. Available at: blog.educpros.fr/romain-pierronnet/2014/02/10/laeres-adopte-un-nouveau-referentiel-devaluation-etablissements/

change in the approach adopted by Hcéres:

PCT 6.: ‘...so the State will not, anymore, look at each and every teaching course but to the package that the institution is offering ... is it consistent as a whole? So, this has changed the work at Hcéres... from the wave E onwards Hcéres looks at what has been done and not what will be done...so the HEIs present their project, the ministry says OK here is your budget and then after five years we will go to see if they have implemented their projects...we analyze what has been done, the current state of affairs...’

It is true that following the 2014 law that proposed the establishment of Hcéres, there is a feeling of change in the relations between the HEIs and the State. As part of this change, for instance, the Hcéres does not have a ‘guide’ for evaluation but a ‘referential for evaluation’. The new referential combines research and teaching under one heading while they were separate in the AERES guide book; it has a section dedicated to the ‘success of students’ while the former guide book included a chapter on ‘students’ experiences. In short, it is more simplified and less descriptive. Additionally, as one of the participants said:

PCT 10: ‘...our evaluation is posteriori...the role of the Hcéres has been weakened and I do not think that it is an accident...it was a voluntary choice... the government thought it should respond to the criticism and so perhaps by changing the name of the Agency this could be done...and there was another practical reason ... the State could not evaluate the ever rising number of courses... so it said we are going to create a national framework that clearly says what is a Bachelor's degree, what is a professional degree, etc., and give the universities the academic autonomy to design their programmes and then the Hcéres will come ... after five years...to see what you have done.’

This indicates that the change toward quality enhancement is well under way in France but the State still plays a central role in steering ‘quality’ through funding and the evaluation reports of Hcéres. As one participant explained:

PCT 7: ‘In France it is the State which brings the budgetary aspect. So that's a very important point. It is worth saying that the higher education institutions... despite their autonomy... operate with rules of public law that are defined at the highest level of the State apparatus. So already there is a

difference with the Anglo-Saxon world... a big difference.'

The difference between England and France lies in two main points, among others: one is the direct role of the State in funding the HEIs in France; the other is the project-based funding which sounds softer as it avoids using the word 'performance' hence helping the State avoid further resistance within academia.

In fact, the State now suggests to partner with universities to minimise risks like the one that happened in 2003 Shanghai ranking. The first Report of the Hcéres (2016) insists that the Agency is the HEIs' *partner in progress*. Since the president of the Agency is nominated by the President of the Republic, his message of partnership implies a change in the State's policy from directive rational planning to a model of self-regulation through incentives. However, and despite all efforts, only one Comue⁴⁴, i.e., 'Paris Sciences et lettres' appears in the top 100 universities in the 2018 Times Higher Education (THE) ranking and only at 72nd position.

5.2.4. Universities! You can run but you can't hide

The third finding of the study is the use of 'autonomy' as a key word across different policy texts and the shift in its meaning. In the 1968 Edgar Faure law, universities' autonomy is reminiscent of the State's trust in the capacities of cultivated professors and students to participate in the governance of universities. The 1984 Savary law- abrogated in 2000- follows suit but prefers to create an evaluating body (CNE) anyways.

⁴⁴ Communauté d'universités et établissements (COMUE) is a grouping plan that replaced the former PRES initiative (based on Article 38 of 2013 ESR law). It is an initiative by the French State to group universities and grandes écoles in a territory in order to increase their visibility and improve their position in international rankings. However, these have only created further bureaucratic layers with more power for the State through performance-based funding and has privileged larger universities and the grandes écoles that enjoy more autonomy and budget. Rollot (2017) calls these initiatives as 'empty shells that are used to further differentiate HEIs and complicate the scenery with no positive impact on the position of French HEIs in the rankings'. The 2018 Times Higher Education ranking has once again caused much debate over the dysfunctioning of such governmental initiatives that are considered archaic and inequalitarian. <http://orientation.blog.lemonde.fr/2017/09/06/comment-organiser-notre-enseignement-superieur/>; also see: <http://jfmela.free.fr/jfmblog/?p=349>; <https://www.senat.fr/rap/r07-382/r07-3822.html>

Autonomy takes a new meaning with the controversial 2007 LRU law that indicates 'the universities should benefit from a governance system that is *better adapted to the challenge of excellence and provision of education to a greater number of students*'. It is clear that the State is faced with an inability to continue directly managing the universities in an increasingly expanding HE system. At the same time, it implies that universities, too, should be engaged in reform processes if they desire 'excellence' in their teaching and research. One participant confirmed this point and said:

PCT 6: '...you see the former approach where the Ministry ordered and the universities obeyed...the approach of the last twenty years...It does not work anymore.... because mass education has meant that universities have had to adapt to receive more people and the situations have been different from one region to another...'

The autonomy project of the State had two aims: 'a) contain public expenditure and allocate funding based on performance; b) make universities accountable as they assume responsibility of their own strategy and resource planning' (Mascret, 2015:78). As one participant mentioned:

PCT 5: 'Autonomy, if you like, meant that the government discharged some of its responsibilities towards the universities... it was a way of successive governments, whether left or right to say...well...the universities will manage and this way we will have fewer problems...because when we impose things there are demonstrations and protests on the streets ... this way we are not imposing anything and they are responsible for their own decisions...'

Practically, this was true. The State gave more power to the President of the universities to use and manage their allocated public budget and their personnel (which was handled by the State till then). One of the participants said:

PCT 6. '...but autonomy had a great advantage: it has allowed universities to adapt to their local context and to seek all possible help and support locally... they have even secured international partnerships with Saudi Arabia, Emirates, Qatar, Singapore... this was not the case before...we were very much confined within our national borders and what the Ministry had to say... and that's important... Because suddenly, the universities that wanted to play the game

started realising their potentials...

As De Boer and File (2009:21) explain, 'through competition and greater institutional autonomy' HEIs are stimulated to respond to 'their customer's demands for relevance' while the government elaborates a system of incentives and sanctions to steer them from a distance and to 'redress government failures'. Another participant thought that autonomy was beneficial for universities but considered that:

PCT 10: '...it wasn't well prepared and it did not include all the necessary tools for the process to flow smoothly across the sector...'

In fact, the State was obliging universities to fully assume autonomy until the deadline of 1st of Jan 2012 without really giving them the wings to fly. In effect, the 4th Report⁴⁵ of the LRU follow-up committee (30 Jan 2012) states 'all universities are as of now autonomous but the process is still incomplete...the process cannot be reduced to legal aspects and must extend to teaching and research...and the role of the State should evolve concurrently with the new status of universities'. One participant mentioned that a few bigger universities who already had established local partnerships with other universities and grandes écoles under the PRES initiative and who had a better capacity to deal with the autonomy situation '*advanced but other smaller universities were wondering what they could do... they were left behind*' (PCT 6).

In a similar vein, in 2013 the Commission of Senators presented a report⁴⁶ to the Council of Ministers underlining the positive aspects of LRU but also expressing their regrets since the transfer of authority has not been based on a thorough analysis of the capacities of each university. The report points out some of the side effect have been an increase in hiring contractual teachers and a multiplication of course offers without a real relevance to the needs of the students and the society. One of the participants said that lack of proper planning in the transfer of authority has also slowed the process of QA in some universities:

⁴⁵ Rapport 2011 du comité de suivi de la loi LRU-Loi no° 2007-1199 du 10 août 2007 relative aux libertés et responsabilités des universités. <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-publics/124000055/index.shtml>

⁴⁶ L'autonomie des universités depuis la loi LRU: le big-bang à l'heure du bilan, Gillot Dominique, Dupont Ambroise, Sénat, 2013. <https://www.senat.fr/notice-rapport/2012/r12-446-notice.html>

PCT 10: ‘...if the president of the university and his team felt that they lacked the capacity to deal with this new situation, they would not adopt QA and put their professors on the streets...’

It has also created further horizontal and vertical differentiation between universities.

PCT 6. ‘Autonomy has undoubtedly widened the gaps upwards and downwards. That is the vision I have’.

The President of University of Montpellier said (2012)⁴⁷ ‘well we are now autonomous but what it brings for us really? they gave us the management of our personnel and they didn’t give us the budget; but at the same time the State continues giving us orders- and this is also the case at grandes écoles like ScPo where the State appoints academics and pay their salaries outside the control of the school. One participant confirmed this and said:

PCT 10: ‘...it is not an autonomy in the British sense of the word...we are in a semi-autonomy...for instance the salary of the permanent academics is paid by the State...so it is to some extent normal that the State controls some of the affairs...’

It is evident that ‘enhanced institutional autonomy has meant higher levels of accountability as well as more stringent and detailed procedures for quality assurance at the state as well as institutional levels (‘the rise of the evaluative state’) ... In many respects deregulation has become re-regulation at another level within the higher education system’, (De Boer & File, 2009). Hence, the ‘autonomy plan’ has in fact helped the State in keeping its powerful position in steering the HEIs more than anything else, as one participant concluded:

PCT 6: ‘...This is not the case elsewhere. So, it is a semi financial autonomy, the state stays at the background anyway. In research, for example, we still depend more or less on the State, if only because we respond to calls for tenders, we respond to programs launched by the State, or by the European programs. So somehow we remain attached to the state.’

⁴⁷ Sauvons l’université: A l’heure de la LRU, V. Soulé, Libération, 30 Jan 2012; http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2012/01/30/a-l-heure-de-la-lru_792111

5.2.5. The English excellence and discipline: anticipating and avoiding the plague

This section presents an analysis of the findings on the English HE policy and quality code and some of the interviewees' input. It is divided into three parts: *a) Anticipating and avoiding the plague: the English excellence and discipline; b) Kaizen à l'anglaise and quality life cycles; c) from a trustworthy to a risky business.*

The first finding here indicates that there is an invariable consensus across all policies- from Robbins Report till today- that the English HE is recognised for its excellence across the world. For instance, the foreword of Browne Report (2010) states: 'for a nation of our scale, we possess a disproportionate number of the best performing HEIs in the world'. However, unlike the French, excellence is not a static phenomenon. The English make a conscious effort to safeguard their excellence, even if not always completely successful. For instance, the Robbins Report (Article 40) asserts that '*we must demand of a system that it produces as much high excellence as possible...that it safeguards standards...*'

Semantically speaking, the word 'must' expresses an obligation to safeguard standards. Hence, it rejects *reactivity* -which happens in France- and compels *prevention* and *responsiveness* instead. This approach can be easily detected across HE policies in England. For instance, already in (1997:3), the *Dearing Report: Higher Education in the Learning Society* proposes setting up a National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education 'to make recommendations on how the purposes, shape, structure, size, and funding of higher education, including support for students, should develop to meet the needs of the UK over the next 20 years'. Even prior to that, the Robbins Report (1963, Article 102) gives 'importance to internal communications' (P.220) as a way to ensure a coherent approach to the management of universities as part of which 'technology was accepted into universities during the 19th century'. In France, it is with a considerable delay of five decades that the recent White Paper (2017:8 & 13) recognises, in retrospect, that 'we are in a period of major transformation...in which ...technological change and changes in knowledge [is happening] ... and in

this new world to succeed...making our country a learning society is now a political objective...and the purpose of this White Paper’.

On the contrary, the English HE positions itself in a changing world and therefore develops a shared awareness that institutions and teachers will have to respond to this changing world and the more discerning student population.

PCT 19: ‘this may sound like a cliché, but becoming number one is easy, what is important is to remain number one and from my experience with the English higher education system, I know that there is this tendency to learn from the past experiences and to change for the better...this is their strength...it’s very different from the Continental approach...they don’t get tangled with the past...they move forward...and so the whole system advances...’

This is reminiscent of Article 1.20 of the Dearing Report (1997) that asserts: ‘while traditional and still-relevant values must be safeguarded, higher education need to continue to adapt to the needs of a rapidly changing world...the future cannot be forecast from the past...it is clear that a policy based on ‘more of the same’ is not an option.’ And therefore, while respecting the autonomy and independence of the HEIs, the HE ‘needs continuity in the framework which it operates to support its achievements of quality and distinctiveness’ (Dearing Report, Article 1.9). For instance, one participant referred to the importance of a common framework of standards and said:

PCT 11: ‘I think all institutions recognise that they have an interest in ensuring that quality standards in higher education are secured, it’s reinforced through the external examining system but there is, I think, a well-established understanding of what quality and standards represent in higher education.’

Another participant talked about the autonomy of English HEIs and their direct responsibility in providing high quality qualifications and experiences saying:

*PCT 8: ‘...the higher education institutions and academics enjoy sufficient independence to make their own decisions about how they deliver their courses...but there are **expectations** that need to be met in terms of relevance of the material, about the appropriateness of courses, meeting the expectations*

of stakeholders, students, employers and so on...'

In a Foucauldian panopticon, these *expectations* are used as conditions to evoke a certain behaviour among the HEIs. They become an actor's own rationality towards calculated ends- or their 'instrumental rationality' in Weber's words (1978:24). By acting upon these expectations 'the higher education through excellence in its diverse purposes can **justifiably** claim to be world class', (Dearing Report, Article 1.4). Thus, unlike the French case, there is no fatality in HEIs providing proof that they are excellent; on the contrary they are engaged in a conscious effort to safeguard rigour in their awards and are explicit and clear in how they go about their business. One Participant referred to the fact that there is a well-established understanding of quality and standards in higher education, because

PCT 11: '.... there is no national awarding organisation and universities are their own awarding bodies, there is a need to try to establish some consistency between universities in terms of standards of higher education qualifications, for example the question that a degree in history is the same from oxford university and oxford brookes ... you know these are challenging questions for the university sector... they understand they have that responsibility to provide that public assurance about standards in higher education qualifications.'

Therefore, while the QA mechanisms are developed to allow diversity throughout the system, they should 'ensure that diversity is not an excuse for low standards or unacceptable quality...to maintain high global reputation of UK higher education (Dearing Report, Article 10.8). HEIs' freedom means that they are 'held accountable for the excellence of their academic provision, and distinctiveness of their research and teaching' (BIS, 2011). Consequently, if 'a university suddenly decided to devote the greater part of its resources to research, to the almost total neglect of teaching, would doubtless be something of a scandal' (Robbins Report, Article 717). In a similar vein, another participant referred to a 'genetic disposition' of HEIs in England and said:

PCT 8: '...I think the university system in the UK is based on sort of an assumption of collective responsibility between institutions and it works well through peer review because.... I think all institutions recognise that they have

an interest in ensuring quality standards in higher education.'

Hence, the first finding here indicates that there is a sense of renewal and forward-thinking in how the English HE maintains its excellence and quality standards. From a Foucauldian perspective, this alludes to a sub-textual agenda of governmentality through quality panopticon, as will be further discussed below.

5.2.6. Kaizen 'à l'anglaise' and quality life cycles

The second finding of this study echoes Morley's (2003) thesis on the relationship between quality and power and the prominence of a Kaizen culture in the English higher education. That is, as the English HEIs have endeavoured towards maintaining their excellence, they have been subject to normalising technologies and discourses that have instilled a quasi-religious capillary power in the HEIs and their academics. Quality regimes have implied 'lack, deficit, rescue, and renewal... reminiscent of the Christian notion of the original sin'. And as it takes a lifetime to redeem one's reputation if labelled as 'low quality', the English HEIs' interest has been in '*the utility value or 'just-in-time' ...skills and competences*' (Morley, 2003:14). As it was discussed before, while the English HE has opted for well-elaborated *responsive* planning to avoid defamatory accusations in international rankings and local surveys, the French have adopted a *reactive 'just-in-case'* approach.

What is clear is that quality routines and a focus on performativity have resulted in *operant conditioning* among English HEIs. This is a psychological condition where a learned behaviour is controlled by consequences (Thorndike, 1905, law of effect is at the origin of Operant conditioning). To create such a condition in HE, different methods of positive reinforcement (awards for excellence; higher ranking) and negative reinforcement (loss of reputation; lower ranking) are utilised to create a series of common-sense and self-evident practices. The operant conditioning is a necessary arrangement towards creating a *regime of truth* among the HEIs that operate within a panopticon. The first steps towards conditioning HEIs were taken in the late 1980s when the English State was looking to initiate and engraft external quality regimes. To this end, the State

used a well-known strategy in game theory called 'Nash equilibrium'. This can be detected from one of the participant's comments:

PCT 11: '...in the late 1980s there was talk about asking the inspectorate in schools to inspect universities as well and that was something which the vice chancellors found unacceptable and so they offered to do it themselves... in fact, a self-regulating, self-accrediting system for QA.'

In cooperative game theory, Nash equilibrium is attained when two or more rational players change their strategies if others change too, otherwise there is no gain in unilateral change of strategy. The State pursued a change in its strategy to fund universities. It was clear that without the cooperation of universities a unilateral governmental change was irrelevant. Therefore, the State created an existential risk shock for universities (the inspection by school inspectorate) to provoke the best response from universities, i.e. adoption and internalisation of quality regimes. As Ulrich (2006:331) explains: the shock of danger is a call for a new beginning. Where there is a new beginning, action is possible... and this common activity...means freedom'. And the quality panopticon operates on the basis of the free choice of its inmates (HEIs) who adhere to the collective norms and police themselves.

Once the quality machine was put on the rail, it had to advance and thus, as one of the participants mentioned: *'over the time there has been some significant changes in terms of the approach to quality assurance...'* (PCT 8).

The analysis of quality discourses confirmed this participant's view and revealed that quality has followed a particular 'life cycle' -to use Jackson's (2015) terminology.

The starting point for quality regimes goes back to the 1991 White Paper where the authorities made a vague attempt to introduce differing views of what QA in HE should include. I say vague because on its Page 24, the White Paper provides definitions for quality control, quality audit, validation, accreditation, and quality assessment. However, as Brown (2011: 40) has pointed out, there is no

precision as to the benefits or the costs of each of these regimes. It was not clear that audits and assessments differed and that the latter was associated with financial consequences. At the time, the general understanding was that:

*PCT 8: 'As part of that arrangement in 92, the Funding Councils were given statutory obligations to assure the quality of the institutions they were funding so it was all about **public accountability**. that by giving money directly, block grants to institutions, there was an expectation that the institutions could demonstrate the quality of their provision.'*

Another participant confirmed that the first round of quality cycle focused on public accountability and said:

*PCT 11: '...first time round there was a lot of activity in actually putting the systems in place, the purpose was very much the **fitness for purpose** and whether or not the institutions could demonstrate the quality standards of their provision.'*

The first cycle of quality regime resembles the first step in the PDCA cycle during which strategic plans are developed and tested. Logically, the step that follows involves learning from the plan and checking if it works properly and if further improvement is required to attain the expected results. And this is what happened during the second phase of quality life cycle in England. One participant mentioned:

*PCT 11: 'The second round of audits that was done in 1990s was more about demonstrating **effectiveness** not whether or not the systems were there, the systems were established by the time of the second round of the audits but it asked from the institutions to provide **evidence that those systems were working effectively** and that often, involved detailed discussions at subject level about the practice of quality insurance within institutions....'*

This participant is in fact referring to the period between 1992 to 1997 when two parallel quality systems were run, i.e., the institutional audit by HEQC and the subject review by Funding Councils, as previously discussed in the

literature review. This period corresponds to the 'check' part of the PDCA cycle. It also represents another round of power struggle between the State and the universities' vice-chancellors and marks the beginning of the 'quality wars' that eventually led to the creation of the QAA.

The next phase of this power struggle sets the basis for the third cycle of quality life from 2008-9 onwards as one of the participants explained:

PCT 8: '... the vice-chancellors complained about the cost of engaging in a second round of subject level review and persuaded the Secretary of the State, David Blunkett at the time...and that was the end of subject review and led to the resignation of the QAA chief executive...it was a major upheaval for the Agency...'

The real issue was that the QAA subject review was dismantling the historical quality culture that in 'the British mode had placed strong authority at the bottom...but has emphasised collegial over personal approach' (Clark, 1983: 128). Additionally, from a Foucauldian perspective, the gaze of the QAA was taking universities' traditional identity away and was replacing it with an unknown other under a different regime of power. This gaze had a determinative impact on the identity of the HEIs, as Sartre (1956:263) asserts: 'I still am my possibilities...but at the same time the Look alienates them from me'.

In 2009, the Select Committee inquiry into higher education reverts the game. Instead of QAA looking into the effectiveness of universities' quality systems, the effectiveness of the Agency's institutional audits is put under serious question. This shift in power was due to two main reasons:

- a) a *diminishing return*: where there is a real concern over time that the processes of audit 'has become less effective as quality assurance has become embedded within institutional practice and the methodology became both familiar and predictable' (Jackson, 2015:1)
- b) a *cartesian dualism with regards to the meaning and scope of QA mechanisms*: as 'QAA looked at systems and procedures whereas the select committee was concerned about issues like grade inflation,

value for money, or about complaints by students and how they were being addressed by the universities' (PCT 8).

As a consequence, the third part of the quality life cycle began when *'the emphasis was very much on **enhancement**, on what the institutions are doing to improve the quality of students' experiences in their institutions' (PCT 11).*

One participant said that this study was conducted at a very important time because:

PCT 8: '...having ensured that institutions are taking it seriously and their systems work effectively and they are able to fulfil the expectations of the stakeholders.... There is a question mark about what happens next in terms of taking forward the agenda of quality insurance.'

The answer to this question is in fact the third finding of this section which is explained below.

5.2.7. From a trustworthy to a risky business

In 'The archaeology of knowledge', Foucault (1972) talked about analysing a 'regime of practice', 'the regularities, logic, and self-evidence that connects what is said and what is done, the codes imposed and the reasons given' (Adler et. al, 2014:17). The logic that runs underneath the HE policy discourses in England is *risk*. A language of uncertainty, competitiveness, and risk is repetitively used to remind the English HEIs and their academics that their historical gains in excellence could be in peril if it did not:

- safeguard standards (Robbins Report, 1963),
- seek to continuously improve its performance (Dearing Report, 1997),
- create genuine competition for students between HEIs which is not possible within the current system (Browne Report, 2010),
- create a new fit-for-purpose regulatory framework (BIS White Paper, 2011),
- promote value for money and a greater choice and opportunities for students (HERA, 2017).

These are indicative of a context in which HEIs are considered as risky businesses in competing markets, both internal and global. The omnipresent risk/threat is non-personal, it is diffused, and it encompasses all aspects of HE, its teaching, its research, and its very identity. It demands a continuous change in practices to avoid risk. It simultaneously warns against the risk and provides the remedies. It insinuates a variety of rescue plans, e.g., accountability towards the general public in 1990s or accountability towards a select public, i.e., the student in recent years.

It is, therefore, no surprise when the BIS White Paper: Students at the Heart of the System (2011) very clearly sketches out the next stage of quality cycle to be risk-based:

‘We will introduce a risk-based quality regime that focuses regulatory effort where it will have the most impact and gives powers to students to hold universities to account. All institutions will continue to be monitored through a single framework but the need for, and frequency of, scheduled institutional reviews will depend on an objective set of criteria and triggers, including student satisfaction, and the recent track record of each institution’. (BIS 2011: 37)

This is an example of capillary power capable of conditioning and harmonising the behaviour of all inmates so that the gaze of the panopticon can operate more effectively. The HE system will positively reinforce the behaviour of those HEIs that can *justify* they are excellent as they will have less frequent reviews while those considered as having lower quality and higher risks will be punished and will go through more frequent scrutiny. The role of the students who are ‘now paying more and should get more’ (as was first emphasised in the Browne Report, 2010) is now prioritised as part of the panopticon gaze. They will watch the HEIs through their new ‘Office for Students- OfS’ and its legal instrument the ‘Quality Assessment Committee’ (HERA, 2017, Articles 1 & 24). The role of QAA is reduced from the main agency to only one of the eligible agencies that are to collaborate with the OfS and go through its procurement processes. Within this new risk-based approach, the Agency’s strategic plan is to help HEIs build on their world-class quality (as shown in the title of QAA strategy 2017-2020); and to do so it will deliver innovative new services and will remain accountable and transparent to its stakeholders (QAA, 2017)⁴⁸.

⁴⁸ Available at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/QAA-Strategy-2017-20.pdf>

The risk-based approach to quality bears several impacts on HEIs and further tightens the grasp of the panopticon. One immediate impact is a differentiation between the 'leper' and the 'healthy' as was the case in Foucault's plague-stricken city. one of the participants said:

PCT 11: '...how would we be able to say this institution is 'high-risk' and the other one just around the corner is 'low-risk'...we are talking about 25 years of trial and error in quality... there is literally no HEI that has not been subject to at least five audits and I can say there is no institution that has not developed an internal quality mechanism...there may be minor differences between institutions but this does not mean that we can create a list with some as low and others as high-risk...'

The sharp vertical differentiation of HEIs under a risk-based quality regime resembles the Foucauldian city where the affected persons (the high-risk HEIs) are quarantined and are kept under constant surveillance. It can also be interpreted as an old political tactic: 'divide and conquer'. In fact, dividing the already differentiated HEIs and their disciplines has not been a herculean manoeuvre of the evaluative State since the 1970s. The task is even easier now that the HEIs have internalised competition and engaged in the 'reputation race' (Van Vught, 2008). What is important in this recent *politics of fear* is that it will renew and accelerate a culture of compliance as the HEIs fear being quarantined as 'high-risk'. It may produce a compulsion to act under an Orwellian surveillance while 'the boundary between rationality and hysteria becomes blurred' (Ulrich, 2006:335).

A resemblance can be detected between the French and the English HE politics of divide and rule. As was observed, the French government bestowed universities with autonomy to hold each university accountable for their own successes and failures. One participant stated that 'among multiple reasons, one was to avoid student riots'. The English government could be pursuing the same goal by creating a risk-based environment in which the universities are increasingly individualised and differentiated- as Foucault (1982) stated individualisation is a way of exercising power over subjects. Consequently, if universities are labelled as high risk and fail to satisfy the best interest of their customers, then any expression of students' discontent will be directed towards

universities and not the government and therefore riots in the magnitude of the one that followed the Browne Report of 2010 could be avoided. Hence, should there ever be a protest, it will be much smaller and therefore more controllable and it will be an internal affair between two legally autonomous institutions, i.e., the universities and the OfS or the student unions in the course of which no democratic government would interfere. Unless, of course the two parties invite the risk-defining knowledgeable State to step in and help them settle their issues.

In this regard, one of the participants talked about the fact that there has been a move towards a more centralised approach in HE governance and said:

PCT 11: ‘...so it does get to the root of the nature of quality assurance, about whether the sector should be ensuring itself or whether the government has a role in assuring quality and increasingly the funding council sees its role as protecting the interests of the students so there is that tension about whether students’ interests are being adequately addressed through a co-regulation model or whether there needs to be greater government intervention.’

My understanding is that the State has already increased its power in steering HEIs. It has done so through market-oriented initiatives including the establishment of the OfS which is ‘to have regard to guidance given by the Secretary of State’ (HERA, 2017 Article 2, Item 3) and by associating a language of risk with the HE sector. As Jackson (2015: 3) explains: ‘the use of the term ‘risk’ implies that higher education in England is inherently ‘risky’...the idea runs counter to the original intention of the AAU which was to promote public confidence in the security of academic standards’. It seems to me, that the English government is creating more cells and more enforced communication to inculcate the new risk-based norms in the quality panopticon while ‘its leash has become very short indeed’ (Raban, 2014: 92). It makes one wonder if the English are borrowing the French *milles feuilles* approach to maintain a more distributed power in steering the HE. But even if they are, they remain more transparent compared to their French counterparts because according to the 2016 corruption perception index⁴⁹, the UK is ranked 10th while France occupies the 23rd place.

⁴⁹ This is an annual report by Transparency International that ranks countries based on the perception of their corruption. The higher the rank of a country, the less its perceived corruption. The 2016 report is available at:
https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016

To conclude and to answer **RQ1. on the definition of quality at national levels in France and England**, it is important to note the underlying NPM worldview that has given rise to quality discourses in both cases. These can be detected in policy discourses that allude to ‘learning society’, ‘students’ satisfaction’, ‘excellence’, ‘responsibility and autonomy’, ‘employability of graduates’, and ‘knowledge society’, for instance. In the case of France, the State continues to play a central role in defining quality regimes and there has been a slow move from QA to QE with importance given to institutional evaluation. A recent study⁵⁰ (2017) indicates that the French judge the quality of their higher education has decreased substantially in the last ten years. Nonetheless, the State continues to safeguard and reinforce the historical association of the grandes écoles with meritocracy, selectivity, prestige and therefore a perceived high quality, while universities’ quality is considered lower and in need of constant reforms.

In England, the State has associated quality with funding and more recently with the possibility of a risk-based ranking in order to steer universities. Prominence has been attached to institutional audits, subject reviews, teaching and research excellence, as well as students’ satisfaction. The role of students in defining quality has increased as customers investing noticeable amounts in HE, nonetheless, the government has gradually increased its influence by renewing quality guidelines and standards.

In short, the Foucauldian quality panopticon is more clearly constructed in the English HE discourses with a ‘shift from corporatist to one driven by pressure-group politics’ (Filippakou & Tapper, 2008) i.e., the students. The evaluative State in France has been more flexible and has encouraged improvements hence allowing the political elite to reinvent themselves through the parallel system of grandes écoles.

⁵⁰ Les Français jugent la qualité de l’enseignement supérieur en baisse. (2017) Available at: www.vousnousils.fr/2017/03/13/les-francais-jugent-la-qualite-de-lenseignement-superieur-en-baisse-601057

5.3. RQ2. What quality management mechanisms are in place in the two-selected elite higher education institutions in England and France?

The first RQ focused on an analysis of ‘formal’ definitions of quality in England and France. In this section, I have presented the findings of the research regarding the ‘situated’ meaning of quality in internal quality mechanisms of ScPo in Paris and the LSE in London. This will reveal the possible continuities or ruptures with the national quality policy discourses and will provide a general understanding of the role and authority of these sample elite HEIs in the quality panopticon.

Prior to presenting the findings in this section, I wish to clarify that in this study, HEIs and their environment are viewed as elements of the same interconnected *pattern*. As patterns evolve, so do the HEIs and their environment. Barnett (2011:62 & 70) explains this by saying: ‘*Being* is always active. Being a university, therefore, is not a passive existence...the university is in the world and of the world’. Therefore, although the State exerts its power in inflicting Sisyphean normative quality requirements on the regulated -Chatov (1981) called this the ‘regulatory sadism’- it would be a mistake to assume that the HEIs are separate from their environment and are subjected to external forces without asserting their own influence on the patterns of HE. The HEIs are complex and dynamic organisations that may change and organise themselves into new forms as they are positioned and position-taking within a pattern. Consequently, a shift in patterns towards constructing the quality panopticon may lead to an infinite variety of qualitatively different internal quality systems in HEIs. These internal QA systems are not generic but specific to HEIs’ initial point of departure, e.g., resources, culture, and prestige in a certain spatio-temporal condition. In fact, depending on the weight of the above-mentioned external and internal *attractors*, universities evolve in chaotic patterns- also called Lorenz systems.

5.3.1. The case of Sciences Po Paris

5.3.1.1. Caught between two worlds

As one of the renowned ‘State-building’ institutions, ScPo is caught between two worlds. In one world, it is the emblem of primacy, prestige, and quality and, *‘it is regarded by the State as a renowned institution, an innovative institution, an institution that has always been intelligent and subtle...and is still enjoying a very good relation with the State’ (PCT 7)*. In the other, it is only another HEI competing in the international market for funding, students, partnerships and has now *‘more than 40% international students whose presence is creating a unique cultural diversity that you cannot see in other French universities, but which is also threatening as it brings with it an Americanisation of the system’ (PCT 9)*.

Previously, in the literature review, I used the image of a tilt-a-whirl to draw a resemblance between the rotating cars and the HEIs; the fixed pivots and the States; and the rotating platform underneath with the global quality frameworks. ScPo has a historical weight in the local quality market and therefore as *‘part of a group of universities called Comue⁵¹ it is the only one among them with full autonomy over its pedagogy and training...’ (PCT 9)*. But in reaction to the fast-paced rotations of the platform, it has not enjoyed the same weight and has been pushed to enter the market and adopt aggressive internationalisation in a hasty way- in *reaction to* rather than in *anticipation of* change that characterises the whole French HE sector.

Hence, ScPo is facing new challenges: *‘in 2006 ScPo had 5000 students in 2015 it has 13,000 students... that is more than double in less than ten years ... and so ScPo does not work like before, there is criticism, there are complaints... so measures have been taken and there had been good results but it’s a work in progress’ (PCT 9)*. And although there are external quality indicators, *‘the internal indicators of quality are still being discussed...because they have to be valid and reliable so that they can then be communicated to the teachers and the*

⁵¹ ScPo Paris is part of Université- Sorbonne Paris Cité Comue (USPC)

staff...there is a lot of work being done in this regard ... but it is not finished...' (PCT 7). The AERES report (2014:13) confirms that ScPo 'already had a number of indicators and data, but until recently there was a lack in the School's analytical capacities needed to use the data for decision-making'.

The above comments demonstrate a pattern of continuity between the formal national and the situated institutional approach to quality. ScPo seems to have been caught by surprise by a rapid massification and internationalisation just like the rest of the French HE system. In reaction, it has built on its unique legal status as an autonomous HEI to quickly arrange for '*an openness to the international world*' (PCT 9) as a lucrative business. Yet, the School seems to be in a crawling transitional state. According to the AERES report the school has engaged in international activities since the end of the 1990s when it adopted the LMD cycle proposed by Bologna, for instance. However, still in 2015 when I worked there, the school was keen on emphasising the prominence of its traditional in-house culture of bureaucracy and the French 'no spoon-feeding' educational policy rather than deploying a comprehensive institutional quality policy that followed the anglo-saxon models.

This dominant mentality was obvious in one participant's comment: '*at ScPo, students sit in classes where you have people coming from 4 to 8 different countries and this is already an exposure to the international world as they work together and do exercises and all*' (PCT 7). This means that the school is more reliant on the goodwill of individual students. However, transformative internationalisation is not about students simply rubbing shoulders but about integrating international understandings into the design of the programmes and services.

The position that ScPo is taking fits the general scenery of French HE and alludes to what Morgan (2006:248) calls an 'egocentric organisation'. These institutions 'have a rather fixed notion of who they are or what they can be and are determined to impose or sustain that identity at all costs ... they see themselves as entities...surviving *against* the vagaries of the outside world, which is often constructed as a domain of threat and opportunity'.

There are several evidences for this. Firstly, page 8 of ScPo 2020 Strategy clearly states: 'Sciences Po is unique and intends to remain as such'. Additional evidence can be traced in the complete absence of any reference to educational quality at ScPo Paris in the School's 2013 and 2020 strategy documents. Furthermore, in the AERES 2011 audit report of ScPo the topic of 'quality policy' takes only half of a page (page 13) in this 64-pages document and even there no reference whatsoever is made to the school's educational provision and delivery. Another telling evidence is ScPo (2013:3) strategy that refers to the '*great injustices* in THE rankings in which the LSE is ranked 4th while ScPo is ranked 105th'. These 'scandalous great injustices' have been felt by the whole French HE system following the 2003 Shanghai shock and demonstrate a 'cooling out process' (Clark, 1983) where failure or denial is the effect of a structural discrepancy between ends (ranking) and means of HE in France.

The main findings of the study are discussed below to provide further analysis.

5.3.1.2. Quality among our local elite means selection, meritocracy, and employability

The first finding from the data reveals that ScPo defines quality based on '*meritocracy and selectivity, egalitarianism, and employability of its graduates*' (PCT 7).

Being selective equals excellence and this is confirmed on page 7 of ScPo 2020 Strategy document that indicates:

'Sciences Po knows how to combine values of excellence and openness...We fully assume this social responsibility. We are a selective institution, both out of necessity, because our capacities are limited, but also by will because we want our students, like our teachers, to share our educational and scientific project ...'

In accordance with the above official statement of the School, one participant referred to the different ways in which ScPo is a high-quality institution and said:

PCT 7: ‘...with regards to quality of teaching... there are two things...one is the recognition...this is what makes the quality of an institution, the recognition by the enterprises, by the State.... Then you have the quality of the students...they are selected from among the best...that is also an indicator of quality...those who study at ScPo have passed difficult exams and if they enter the institute it means they merit sitting in classes and listen to the well- known professionals, ex-ministers, and Nobel prize winners ...’

The link between selectivity and meritocracy cannot be an egalitarian one. Several studies have shown that both in the case of Oxbridge (Zimdars, 2007; Faust, 2013) and the French grandes écoles (Bourdieu 1989; De Saint Martin, 2005; Karrer, 2012) admission patterns into selective institutions are in fact a challenge to meritocracy.

This is reflected in the following statistics. According to the website of the Conference of Grandes Ecoles (CGE)⁵², the family background of grandes écoles students include: only 3.5% from agricultural families, 6% from small businesses, and 5.2% from working class.⁵³ In the case of ScPo, the ZEP initiative has been at best a form of cosmetic surgery despite much propaganda. According to Prost (1981) and Tiberj & Riou (2004), the number of students from higher social background has been on the rise systematically: in 1966 (44%), in 1978 (65.5%), in 2007 (87.5%), while the students from lower social classes made only up to 7.5% in 2011. Thus, the ZEP strategy has in fact legitimised the very existence of the selective admission policies at ScPo rather than paving the way for underprivileged students who ‘*know that once selected they are entering the elite word*’ (PCT 7).

⁵² Created in 1973, CGE (law of 1901) comprises 265 members, of which 222 are recognized by the State e.g. ScPo. It also has about 20 member or partner companies and 35 associations and organizations (unions of teachers, training institutes, duty devotees, alumni association).

⁵³ CGE, “origine sociale des élèves : ce qu’il en est exactement”, www.cge.asso.fr; June 2005.

The idea that 'selectivity of the student intake means quality' is indeed inscribed in the ideology of ScPo. For instance, another participant referred to the responses to a 45 items survey that has been conducted in 2014-15. This targeted 3000 out of 3883 contractual teachers who provide 90% of teaching hours at ScPo while the permanent academics are responsible for only 9% of the teaching (AERES evaluation report, 2014:21). A total of 1987 of the sample-some 55%- responded (survey results ScPo 2014:2). This participant referred to the teachers' responses to 'why they chose to teach at ScPo Paris' and said:

PCT 9: '...if they come to teach at ScPo it is for the quality of students...because practically 9 out of 10 of students who are accepted have excellent grades in their baccalauréat...ScPo is highly selective...each national and international student's file is carefully reviewed.....and that is one aspect that guarantees quality at ScPo.'

The concept of meritocracy that this participant is referring to fits a Foucauldian perspective of power. It is a regime of truth that appropriates an apolitical discourse to hide its underlying undemocratic ideology and to create capillary power in its subjects. On the surface, meritocracy is the antithesis of unjustified inherited aristocratic privilege; it is based on talent and evidence. Underneath, though, it adheres to the old Aristotelian and Platonic aristocratic virtues that separates 'the chosen people' from those of 'low birth, no property, and with vulgar employments' that democracy may choose. In the collective conscious of the French society, therefore, the selective admission to ScPo resonates a rupture with the aristocratic past only to replicate it with elite meritocracy. In Orwell's animal farm, too, 'all animals were equal, but some animals were more equal than others.'

The meritocracy discourse hides at least several realities. It hides the fact that the CPGE classes and the selective entrance exam were adopted in the 1970s as the bourgeoisie played 'the rarity card' to raise the value of their grandes écoles degrees in the face of the increasing number of graduates from mass universities. It also hides that the students who arrive at the CPGE classes are

from higher social classes who have 'both the means and the information about the success in the competition or the prestige of the proposed training' (Karrer, 2012:17). It also conceals that the 30% scholarships that ScPo is proud to provide to its students (ScPo Strategy 2020:7) is in fact a reproduction mechanism for its students from higher social classes- knowing that only 7.5% of ScPo students are from marginalised backgrounds. And finally, it enshrouds the complicity of the State with the grandes écoles as it allocates 13,500 Euros per student to grandes écoles compared to the average of 6,800 for university students (Karrer, 2012:25)

Consequently, ScPo remains part of a local elite market of grandes écoles where the currency is *prestige and status* but not the *quality of educational provision*. Within this *prestige competition*, students' characteristics at entry, i.e., their 'high degree of preparation, test scores, legacy status, and so forth' (Pusser, 2012:45) are considered as a manifestation of the high quality of the institution. As Neave (2012:67) explains: 'The essential feature of the French elite sector is its ability *wholly* to control the quality of student inflow'.

The high prestige of the institution and its selective admission processes, then, leads to a high employability rate among the graduates. Thus, no matter what the quality of education has been, the ScPo graduates have a better chance of being recruited compared to university graduates. While a ScPo degree remains rare and prestigious, universities are accessible for anyone holding a high school diploma and they use a *posteriori* evaluation where instead of 'demanding brilliance to enter, students are considered brilliant if they graduate'⁵⁴ (Neave, 2012). And this is not sufficient for the employers, while the selective process of ScPo is. Thus, when I asked participants about the quality of education at ScPo, their response was:

PCT 7: '.... when you have 80% of ScPo students who find a job either

⁵⁴ It is not within the scope of this study to analyse the teaching/learning conditions in French universities. Nonetheless, it is necessary to say that an ensemble of elements lead to a high dropout rate among French university students within the first year of their study. These factors include: the 'ease' in entering universities, lack of students' motivation and the irrelevance of their university fields to their personal preferences as well as their despair in finding a job with their degrees, crowded classes delivered in the form of 'magistrate seminars', lack of professors' pastoral and academic support, lack of personalised support for students facing academic difficulties. More details can be found in Claire Donovan (from multiversity to postmodern university) in Routledge Handbook of the Sociology of Higher Education (2016).

before leaving the school or within six months following their graduation, this is an indicator of quality...when you have ScPo graduates at the highest levels of leadership in enterprises or the government that is an indicator of quality...'

Another participant added: *'...of course there are other measures, like the surveys, the evaluations, the students' feedback and meeting with the deans...but as I said employability of ScPo students is a very important gauge for the quality of the school... (PCT 9).'*

Several factors shall be considered when analysing ScPo graduates' employability. Firstly, the global human capital discourses and the national HE policies on employability have been aligned with what the school has been doing since its very establishment, i.e., professional training for the elite. And in its 2020 strategy, ScPo emphasises that it will continue preparing its students for the job market through 'learning by doing' strategies. In fact, ScPo is appropriating the neoliberal discourses of employability because: a) unlike the external quality forces that interrogate the school, employability builds on the School's historical role and empowers it as a 'first tier university producing managers and leaders' (Boden & Nedeva, 2010); and b) it increases its performativity thus raising its place in international rankings as indicated in Table 1.

In addition to the school's strategy that has focused more on preparing students for private enterprises in recent years (AERES evaluation report, 2014:21), the generations of ScPo graduates are part of a network of influence and wealth who can facilitate access to well-paid jobs for the younger members of the club. In addition, as Bourdieu (1987) states, the bourgeoisie have a privileged knowledge of the future economic and political shift and therefore can identify promising fields of study. Thus, today *'more than 80 percent of ScPo graduates now go to private businesses rather than entering the government'* (PCT 7). This is because, following WWII, when the patriotic and nation-building aspirations were ripe among the elite, ENA was the righteous response. With the rise of neoliberalism and global trade, the elite have maintained their 'reinvention capacity' (Gordon, 2004) through new programmes of study at existing grandes écoles like ScPo that better prepare them for the private sector. This also explains

the multiplication of commercial grandes écoles since 1980 with more than 85,000 students today.

The probability of ScPo graduates' employability is also increased due to their smaller classes and the type of skills the school trains them on. The outcomes of a research on grandes écoles graduates show, 'some useful skills on the labour market are more easily acquired in grandes écoles. This is the case in particular of 'analytical thinking' or 'ability to command a foreign language', domains on which grandes écoles have heavily focused their curriculum in the 1990s' (REFLEX, 2009:7). This was confirmed by one participant who said:

PCT 9: '...first it is the very nature of ScPo that we prefer debate, critical thinking and so we train the students to be able to speak in public, to work under pressure, to question the established ideas ...then it is the obligatory internship on the 3rd year of their study ...they get a first-hand training in the field and already have something to add to their CV ...we also have more than 18 languages that are taught and this diversity prepares the students for the kind of jobs they apply for...these are among the factors that help the students succeed in the job market.'

5.3.1.3. The threats and the opportunities of internationalisation

The second finding revealed that the ambitious internationalisation of the school has challenged its locally established definition of quality. Among the main factors influencing the school, reference can be made to: the presence of an increasing number of international and exchange students, 45,1% in 2012 compared to 38, 2% in 2008; creation of dual degrees and partnerships with universities such as: the LSE, Columbia university, George Washington university; and the establishment of the 'Paris School of International Affairs' in 2012 (AERES, 2014:37). One of the participants referred to the different perception of quality in the School and said:

PCT 7: '... we are not going to hide the truth, are we? ScPo Paris has moved towards the Anglo-Saxon world...I mean, we are tempted to say yes to it

all, but then no ... because we are a bit different ... for instance the internal QA objectives, quality of students' life on campus, management ...there is a difference between the French and the Anglo-Saxon world and ScPo objectives are even different from them both...to some extent...'

The above comment perfectly fits the way chaotic Lorenz attractors work. Internationalisation is in fact an attractor that *pushes* ScPo far from its previous equilibrium point and towards an 'edge of chaos'. Once at this situation and while the internal system at ScPo can self-organise, the School is pushed to a point of instability and potential chaos that will in turn create the potential for 'bifurcation'. However, bifurcation from the past, i.e., leaving the old conceptions of quality and replacing it with new ones, may only happen if the push towards the new position is stronger than the longstanding local perceptions of quality. There are certain characteristics of this past condition that are too precious to let go, for instance:

PCT 9: '...one factor that, fortunately, distinguishes us from the Anglo-Saxon world is our concept of university fee...it's not like the American universities that you have to give the student their degrees because they have paid a lot of money...here our students pay based on their family's revenue...and of' course we select the best students and we do not have these sorts of tensions...but this Americanisation of university is fast growing at ScPo...which is not good news...'

In a similar manner, another participant seemed concerned about the change that was happening in the relations between students, the lecturers, and the university and said:

PCT 9: '...students' feedbacks are an important part of ScPo Paris evaluation...and if there is a problem different sources will be looked at to verify the situation...the challenge is how to say this to a professor who has been teaching at ScPo for years...a student, for instance, complained that they were distracted during the exam because another student was eating and the professor did not stop the student!'

What can be detected from the above comment is a fear from the worst,

i.e., 'the McUniversity' (Hayes, 2017). The French HE system, as discussed, is characterised by sharp hierarchies and therefore the older professor's role is that of a 'mandarin' which cannot yield to the new rules of quality management. The McUniversity promotes a 'therapy culture' which requires reminding the students that they are safe intellectually and socially and this stands in contradiction with the established understandings in the French HE and ScPo that consider students as responsible individuals who should only attend to what is their concern, i.e., learning and studying and leave the rest to the adults including their professors and the administrative personnel. The power of the school seems to be challenged with the arrival of an increasing number of international students as well as the French students who by studying in dual degrees have experienced other approaches to service delivery and draw on these experiences to reflect on the quality of their teachers and to fill in their evaluation forms.

5.3.2. The case of the LSE

5.3.2.1. The embodiment of the QAA orthodoxies

An overview of quality enhancement programmes at the LSE reveals the existence of a well-established machinery to ensure that *'the taught offer is of high quality and that the programmes are healthy'* (PCT 12). The School has made a conscious effort to improve its quality management because the dominant understanding at the LSE is that *'any complex organisation needs to have some kind of quality control in place ... so we have to make sure the courses and programmes that we offer are of sufficient quality to attract students in numbers that will help fund the institution ...'* (PCT 12). In short, the LSE is a miniature model of the wider 'Kaizen à l'anglaise' that was discussed as part of RQ1. The two main findings at the LSE are discussed below.

5.3.2.2. More catholic than the Pope: our history, our processes

The first finding at the LSE demonstrates a dominant quality culture across all activities of the School which meticulously replicates external quality frameworks, notably the QAA quality code. By looking at the pattern of internal quality at the LSE, it is obvious that the School has developed a full-fledged quality panopticon combining horizontal and vertical surveillance. It has done so by adopting a Hegelian dialectic approach to QAA's external scrutiny, as explained below.

It is in the mid of reactions to QAA's subject review that the LSE considered, *'the subject review was a very unconstructive process and was not a good use of faculty time to engage with this kind of process... and so, the academic board of the LSE, the senior academic decision-making body... voted in 2001, that the school would secede from the QAA, that we will no longer be accountable to QAA.'* (PCT 12).

As was previously discussed, the English HEIs are bound by the 1997 Dearing Act. This means, the QAA 'Code of Practice' applies to all universities that are receiving public funding and they should be accountable to the Funding Council (HEFCE). Therefore, the above announcement by the LSE was more of a power manoeuvre of an autonomous university which- by the logic of its funding sources- considered it should be more accountable towards its international fee-paying students rather than the QAA. As one participant mentioned:

PCT 12: 'quality is important especially in a place like the LSE where the school is counting on the student's' fees to a greater extent than any other UK institution...but at the same time the School was thinking if we are not going to be accountable to the QAA, what are we going to do instead?... and so, we went through building more or less what the QAA would have expected of us but in kind of an internal way.'

This is an interesting comment from several viewpoints. Firstly, negating

QAA facilitates creating an internal system as a 'collective defence mechanism' against an external threat. As such, the new internal quality mechanisms rely on the common-sense logic of the inmates in the panopticon (departments and their academics) which means resistance would be hard to mobilise. This policy of 'us' and 'them' is kept in check through a narrative of risk that reminds all members of the LSE *'that the internal quality system shields them against the horrors of the QAA as much as possible'* (PCT 12). Subsequently, the two players, i.e., the LSE quality management and the departments realise that they will be better off if they cooperated and acted for the good of the group rather than their individual self-interest. Thus, they'd arrive at a stable state (Nash equilibrium) in which they interact and change strategies only if the other would do so. From a Foucauldian perspective, this leads to the internalisation of external norms and creates a capillary power among inmates.

Secondly, the position that the LSE took killed two birds with one stone. It created a renewed powerful external identity for the School and reinforced its internal popular authority. One of the participants explained that *'first and foremost the LSE wanted the QE mechanisms to align with the university's academic history and culture, this works for the university and if it also happens to be in compliance with the QAA it would be great.'* (PCT 20). This could be interpreted using the Hegelian 'negation of negation' through which the internal quality scheme adopted by the LSE is understood as "a new concept, a higher, richer concept than the previous one, for it has been enriched by its negation or opposite; it contains in itself the old concept, but it contains more than this concept alone..." (G. Hegel, *Soch.* vol. 5 Moscow, 1937, p. 33)⁵⁵.

Consequently, the internal quality becomes the 'popular'⁵⁶ against the external 'vulgar' mechanisms pushing the otherwise segmented departments to prefer the internal quality religion to the alien external one. In addition, as the new system is built on the internal history and culture of the university, it creates a sense of belonging and persuades the inmates that their responsibility in the

⁵⁵ From the online website 'The Free Dictionary' where translated articles of *'The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* (1979)' are available in English.

<http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Negation+of+the+Negation%2C+Law+of+the>

⁵⁶ A distinction used by Bourdieu (1990:150), In other words: *Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, Policy Press.

quality panopticon is based on values, traditions, and affective rational action.

Once this new social contract was in place and the departments spontaneously embraced 'freedom to' but not 'freedom from' (Fromm, 2007) in the new quality regime, the School started its internal QE processes based on a genuine trust in its departments. This initial process is reminiscent of the UGC and its trust-based funding of universities. One of the participants explained:

PCT 4: 'the annual programme review, for instance, was for long left to the departments...now this worked OK for departments that took it seriously and it worked less well for those who didn't... and it was difficult for the School as the awarding body to assure the quality and standards of the awards when the data were in different formats and were products of different kinds of local processes.'

This internal push for centralisation is further reinforced by the 2011 external audit report that finds that 'leaving arrangements for course monitoring and periodic programme review to departmental discretion is not wholly aligned with the Code of Practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review'. What happened next at the LSE resembles the events that followed the end of the binary system in England. At the time, the quality systems used by the polytechnics were adopted and applied to the whole HE system; similarly, at the LSE, the central QE system was developed based on the more sophisticated and developed systems that were used by some departments. One participant commented on this and said:

PCT 12: 'So eventually the LSE moved towards standardising a common practice across the school so that we have comparative data across departments and that's a sort of the system developed in the LSE and the QAA would give the LSE credit for that.'

Once the gaze is centralised, the School, then, engages in a continuous improvement by adopting top-down and bottom-up mechanisms to ensure the high quality of its programmes. For instance, each department has three committees including: Teaching and Learning, Research; and Staff and Student

Liaison Committees. These committees hold one meeting each term to review progress and to attend to possible shortcomings. One participant talked about the significance of these meetings as they *'allow triangulation of data on aspects of academic and student's life that cannot be gathered solely from student's evaluation'* and added:

PCT 12: 'the School is constantly having this sort of existential discussion about 'what is teaching'... 'how can we make it better?'...and I think this is a successful hallmark of a successful quality culture that you are always self-reflective, you are always thinking how you could do things better and I think that's why our processes are successful.'

The *Annual Programme Monitoring Exercise* is also part of this continuous effort to improve quality of teaching and learning *'to capture that self-reflection in some sort of a measurable document and then to use that measure to effect change in a timely way. (PCT 4)*. As Morley (2003: 14) explains, under QA *'the organisation, or unit of analysis, becomes the reflexive project for which all organisational members are responsible'*. This is reminiscent of the Japanese car industry' and of course the Foucauldian panopticon.

In addition to its well-elaborated internal processes, the LSE welcomes external reviews as *'they examine the health of the programmes with a fresh pair of eyes and so can observe and comment on specific points that the internal eyes may not see as such. (PCT 4)*. The external audits are necessary conditions for the LSE to reproduce *'an arbitrary legitimised culture which indirectly supports the maintenance of existing power relations in society, whilst at the same time maintaining apparent independence'* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977:67 quoted in Mann 2008:78).

Additionally, this comment demonstrates a change of strategy in the LSE's approach to external audits from denial, to apathy, and eventually to transformation. As Ulrich (2006) explains, in a risk society, *'relations of definitions are to be conceived analogous to Marx's relations of production'* where the inequalities in defining risks are enabling for powerful actors. In fact, the LSE

reproduced itself as a powerful actor in the midst of the orchestrated resistance that pushed QAA to adopt a more distant approach of institutional audit and abandon the subject reviews. For instance, one participant said:

PCT 12: 'I think the QAA should be focusing their gaze much more intensely on the new entrance to the sector, the new providers that the government has allowed and it should give institutions with a sort of mature and sophisticated internal arrangements a bit of break really'. And as it was discussed previously, this has been suggested as part of the new role of QAA in a risk-based management of quality under the auspices of OfS.

The above comments indicate that the LSE has internalised the external quality panopticon in every aspect of its organisation, although not enough to receive a gold award in the 2017 TEF rankings. The next finding demonstrates the width and breadth of this internalisation.

5.3.2.3. Students at the heart of the system and the staff too

In conformity with external discourses that emphasise the role of students- as delineated in both literature review and RQ1- the LSE has developed a sophisticated quality regime to ensure that *'At the end of the day... it can guarantee students have an enriching sort of an experience but that it is fulfilling and of a good quality for our faculty too'. (PCT 12)*

In fact, what sharply divides the LSE from ScPo is that the former follows the general English tradition and provides pastoral support to both its students and staff. One participant referred to this fact and said:

PCT 4: 'there is a lack of pastoral care in the French system that is striking...I mean if you sit in front of the class and behave as a good student, the teacher pays attention to you and praises you, if you are at the back and you had difficulties, the teacher wouldn't even bother talking to you...and this is one thing students appreciate very much when they study at the LSE because each student

has an academic advisor...so there is always at least this one person that you can go to if you have difficulties...'

This therapy culture is provided because *'some of the LSE programmes are very expensive and students invest a lot of money' (PCT 12)*. Besides, *'students are the main source of funding at the LSE (PCT 12)*. And once the role of students is reconstructed as consumers, they are entitled to quality pedagogy. As Morley (2003: 29) states: 'quality teaching is no longer perceived as a gift, but as a right'. And of course when there is a right, there is a responsibility hence the engagement of students in evaluations, quality enhancement, and committees.

To provide students with a quality education and avoid the risk of under-funding, the LSE pays specific attention to pastoral and academic needs of its staff: *'each member of the staff who is not a professor has got a mentor. So, if an academic's performance has not been up to the expectations, there will be no sanctions but remedies and the role of the mentor is to help an academic that is facing problems in delivering quality teaching' (PCT 4)*.

In the Foucauldian panopticon, pastoral care is a modern matrix of individualisation and therefore an exercise of distributed power. It uses the Christian technique of pastoral power adopting two modern dimensions: one is globalising and quantitative and provides information on how academics compare in rankings; and the other is analytical, salvation-oriented, individualising and continuous.

What is also important in the above comment is that staff are not kept in the dark. From their very arrival at the Institute, they are not only informed but also trained on the teaching and learning standards of the School. From a Foucauldian perspective, the visibility of norms is a trap; they are only visible because they constitute an invisible web of power that help internalisation of the employers' norms. It ensures performativity to reassure both the fee-paying students and the external auditors, but perhaps not to ensure the actual quality of teaching and learning.

The dissemination of information and training are ensured by an office called Teaching and learning Centre (TLC) that is non-existent at ScPo. One participant explained:

PCT 12: 'there is a yin and yang dimension to it all...one office manages all the data gathered from annual programme reviews, student evaluations, the committee meetings, and the external audits and the other says...oh wow, there is a consistent information on the teaching of this academic and so they reach out and they plan for remedial training arrangements.'

Drawing on such a detailed system of quality enhancement, the internal LSE rewards for *teaching excellence* replicate the Teaching Excellence Framework that has been proposed by HEFCE, as one participant explained:

PCT 4.: 'if they have a consistently high teaching scores, they would automatically get a pay increase just for that, and if they have performed well in other respects...for example...citizenship or public engagement or research... they get either a lump sum of money or a raise in their annual salary. So, there are different ways available to reward performance.'

In addition, the TLC helps initiate the younger generation of staff who join the School into their teaching role. For instance:

PCT 12: '... the TLC offers a 'certificate in higher education' where new faculty members have to take a yearlong course module on how to be a good teacher, how to design your lectures, how to design classes and seminars, how to speak how to communicate, how to mark an exam, really important stuff.'

In his classic work on organisations Goffman (1961) examined the ways institutions changed the behaviour of their inmates to reproduce themselves. The above-mentioned certificate is one way that the LSE can make sure that existing practices are reproduced; the centralisation of quality management and committee meetings are the others. An equivalent to this certificate does not exist in the French HE and neither does it at ScPo. And if there had been efforts to ameliorate the contractual academics' experiences at ScPo it has only focused

on 'providing them with a training on how to use computers and the School's moodle pages and 'creating a shared computer room' (Sciences Po Strategy, 2013:5).

To conclude and answer **RQ2. on quality mechanisms at the LSE and ScPo**: In short, both institutions seem to operate in conformity with the national approaches to quality. Consequently, they employ two contradictory philosophies of risk.

Despite some efforts, generally speaking, ScPo adopts a laissez-faire philosophy assuming that everything would fall in place as individual students and staff members would eventually find their ways and that everything is safe as long as they have not proved to be dangerous. As such the School draws on the *benefits of disorder* rather than targeted planning. It seems that the school has privileged *reactivity* and has invested in improving its external ranking rather than pursuing a shift in its internal ways of understanding and enhancing quality. Nonetheless, if panopticon is understood as existence of norms and regulations then there are both external mechanisms- such as the accreditation bodies, the reports of the Audit Court (Cour des comptes), and Hcéres evaluation reports- and internal mechanisms such as the students' evaluation that regulate ScPo's educational activities.

The LSE has created a detailed quality panopticon mirroring the external English HE environment. The panopticon at the LSE is polyvalent, neutral, distributed, and continuous. The underlying worldview of the School is reminiscent of Foucault's knowledge- power concept that holds 'in knowing they control and in controlling they know'. The risk philosophy at the LSE is that of *precaution* and has therefore translated into an institutional Kaizen culture with its systems of continuous improvement, performance rewards, and customer satisfaction. The School aims are to satisfy students and other stakeholders and to safeguard academics and the institution against consequences of being labelled at the lower end of the quality continuum.

However, the fact that ScPo and the LSE hold almost distant places in

rankings may be due to some other additional conditions. According to Mény (2009) one primary condition is the autonomy and resources of universities and the other is the willingness to mobilise all parties and enter the competition by giving up on some of those sacred cows that no government can touch, e.g. the selective CPGE. With regards to the first condition: both Schools are autonomous; the LSE has almost double the resources of ScPo, they both receive public funding (the LSE: up to 15% and ScPo: 50%). It may, therefore, be a matter of willingness and authority in bifurcating from established regulations that affects the performance of ScPo, although the School has made a real effort in climbing the rankings. One participant commented on this and said: *'in Britain we are very pragmatic, when a regulation does not work we suspend it, we are flexible ...whenever you talk to the French you have the 'règlement' thrown at you'... however the dual degree between the LSE and ScPo works very well because 'it combines the British creativity, intellectual autonomy, originality and fun with French rigour and structure and building a level of connaissance ... an ideal education system' (PCT4).*

It would be interesting to see the impact of these two internal quality cultures and philosophies on the daily practices of academics. The next RQ delineates these.

5.4. RQ3. How do academics perceive and enact quality in their professional practice in England and France?

This section presents and discusses the findings from the interviews with twelve academics at ScPo and the LSE. It attempts to understand the impact of two different institutional quality cultures on both the senior and junior academics. Academics' perceptions of quality is still a relatively underdeveloped subject according to several studies (Joao Rosa, 2014; Lomas, 2007). The topic that is even less scrutinised is the impact of unclear institutional quality strategies or even lack of internal quality cultures on academics probably because such a condition simply seems unimaginable following the Bologna Process. Therefore, by answering this question, this study fills an existing gap and provides a first-hand insight into the reality of academics' daily lives at ScPo and the LSE. For

the sake of clarity, I have divided the findings in each university to two parts: senior permanent academics' and junior contractual academics' perceptions.

5.4.1. Sciences Po Paris: senior academics' perception of quality

All three senior enseignant-chercheur (teacher-researchers) interviewed in this study, talked- sometimes extensively- about their resentments and anxieties when they were first 'thrown into a university class' and the fact that neither at university nor at ScPo- in fact 'at any moment of their long teaching career' had they been trained on pedagogy, class management, or psychology of teaching and learning. Their training and employment exams have never prepared them as 'teachers' but as 'specialists in a discipline'. One participant continued by saying:

PCT 1: 'I thought I was...I mean... I really wanted to do my best as a teacher but I was frustrated and so were those poor students and at the same I didn't feel safe talking about my frustrations with anyone at the university...there was no office or a person for this purpose.'

Two interpretations can be drawn: ScPo is part of a wider pattern where higher education teaching is left to the '*professionalism (behaviour of individual actor)*' (Morris, 2008:120) of academics. A lack of support at national and institutional levels de-professionalises teaching because 'subject knowledge alone cannot professionalise teaching; knowledge of pedagogy professionalises the teaching of subject knowledge' (Darling-Hammond et al (2002:286). The second interpretation is in fact based on comments of all three academics who mentioned that due to lack of pastoral support and academic training they had to adopt coping strategies. As they gradually gained knowledge in teaching, they 'informally learnt from exchanges with their peers' (PCT 5) or 'consulted their parents who happened to be school teachers' (PCT 1) or 'kept it all to themselves and gradually learnt through trial and error' (PCT 2). In fact, these comments are in line with the findings in RQ2 that revealed that ScPo relies on the 'benefits of disorder' and the informal exchanges among peers rather than developing an inclusive policy to enhance its quality of teaching and learning.

Furthermore, all three academics referred to a deterioration of the Directorate of Studies and Education from 2000 onwards in the midst of multiple reforms of the school's policy that has prioritised research over teaching; internationalisation; and the creation of departments. Two academics talked positively about the fact that the School has hired specialists who help researchers in engineering their research projects for EU grants, however, they all talked about the 'recent mess' at the School despite the fact that everyone at school is working even more than before. For instance, one participant said:

PCT 5: '... academics' point of contact with the Directorate is a person called 'chargé de mission', these people used to stay at the school for the whole duration of their career, sometimes 40 years or so, there was stability, permanent communication, and a sense of teamwork... with the arrival of Richard Descoings who was concerned about the turnover of jobs, the chargé de mission became the weakest link between the Directorate and academics...in the past eight years, I have personally seen five chargé de mission...they leave because they cannot cope with all the workload...the result is I haven't had a chargé de mission for the past 18 months...it's a complete mess...'

The above comments are indicative of the fact that the School has created a Foucauldian power relation with academics where ceremonies and rituals of the past are dismantled and are replaced with a machinery that assures dissymmetry and disequilibrium. By doing so, the School has sought two direct benefits for the central administration. The fact that the chargé de mission frequently changes reduces the power of the departments and their academics to reject or to oppose the central administration's practice because the communication remains disrupted. In fact, while the asymmetry in knowledge means more power for the central administration the system remains inefficient and redundant hence causing frustration and the resignation of the chargé de mission.

Another participant added: *'In 2009 the School created the disciplinary departments which further complicated things... now we had two parallel*

systems: the department and the central administration...they detested each other... the department refused yielding to the central administration while they also refused doing the administrative things themselves...the direct impact on me as an academic is that still today when I have a problem with my classes or students, I don't know who I should talk to, the department or the absent or the overwhelmed chargé de mission...'(PCT 2).

This situation can be looked at from two different angles. From the departments' side, it is reminiscent of a situation in economic theory called *the tragedy of commons*. This happens when in a shared-resource system, 'the identity and needs of individuals take precedence over those of the collective' (Morgan, 2006:286) therefore generating pathological patterns in the whole system. From the central administration's side, it seems to be a dialectical situation where a new initiative inevitably generates its negation in the form of a *struggle of the opposites*. This situation of resistance between the two opposites reaches an equilibrium point where the whole system experiences stalemate as it can be observed in the comment above. If I revert to the chaotic Lorenz attractors, I can say that taking the whole system from this point to another equilibrium point requires a smart management which shall use internal system-wide attractors such as 'teaching excellence awards' to reduce the resisting forces and empower agents of change from within each department.

At the moment when this study was conducted there was no such scheme at ScPo. However, all three academics referred to two institutional practices that are in place. The first one was their induction programme during which they received information on what the School expectations are- mostly in administrative terms. The second one was the students' evaluation that they interpreted as 'the iron fist of the central administration in a velvet glove' (PCT 5). They, all confirmed their teaching practice was guided by both above-mentioned administrative practices- of course to a larger extent by the students' evaluations. But they also expressed their doubts as to the equal impacts of such practices on senior and junior academics. One participant said:

PCT 1: 'They give you this paper of their expectations but it remains

superficial because once, as a public servant, you are nominated to work at ScPo, you will be there for the rest of your academic life, the institution cannot get rid of you even if students' evaluation of your course is persistently negative'

Another participant said: *'well I want to be the 'good student' and I reply to students' emails, send them feedbacks...I have even changed my style because I saw in students' comments that I didn't give them enough time to talk and debate...but while I am making a real effort without any external recognition, my colleagues are building their research profiles without really being concerned by the students' evaluation'* (PCT 2).

One interpretation of the two above comments is that clear external and internal quality assessment criteria, as constraining as they may be, potentially judge all inmates on equal terms. Paradoxically, the quality panopticon is egalitarian as it 'offers greater transparency so that unethical and corrupt behaviour can be detected more easily' (Mongkol, 2011:37). The norm-setting aspect of quality create a sense of continuity, development, and shared values that although arbitrary allude to continuity survival, and equal opportunity. At its current stage, ScPo lacks a commonly shared quality culture and everyone seems to be trying to outwit or outmanoeuvre everyone else in a Machiavellian power quest. It indicates that ScPo is part of a wider society that is cursed by inegalitarian competitions and deep individualisation that characterise extreme capitalism; these are of course underneath a thick coat of republican sugar, i.e., 'liberté, égalité, fraternité'.

In this regard, one of the participants referred to several factors that inhibit attempts towards a shared quality culture in teaching at ScPo.

PCT 5: 'you should know that in France no inspector or auditor can enter a university class on the basis of autonomy and independence of universities. In addition, the social image of a university teacher is that of a know-all magistrate and so, when you hire teachers there is in fact no record of their teaching...and it is not part of employment processes in France, whether you are hiring local or international colleagues, to ask for such information...as a result what the school

can do is to count on the personal goodwill of academics and to manage the crisis when it strikes.'

This means that ScPo, similar to the rest of the French HE, might be involved in a perpetual crisis management because 'the ideal of higher education teachers as autonomous professionals, in love with their disciplines and dedicated to serving their students, within collegially governed institutions, is largely a myth, although an eloquent and inspiring one' (Scott, 2014)⁵⁷. It may also mean that in addition to the political elites' willingness to maintain the prestige of their ScPo degrees, the School finds itself against 'a nation that does not like the reform' according to the comments of the newly elected President of the republic, Mr. Macron during his visit to Poland on 25th August 2017. And this mentality seems not to have changed so much from the time General De Gaulle said: 'How can one govern a country with more than 200 cheeses ... I can't help the French from being French'.

But these do not explain the lack of a clear educational quality frame at ScPo, particularly as the School seems to be aggressively making profit of its presence in the international market. For instance, *'the courses are provided à la carte without any continuity and general learning outcomes for a Masters' degree just because the School thinks it has to remain attractive and so jumps on a professional's idea of a course on...I don't know...the French West Indies, for example, without thinking if this is even relevant to one 18-years' old academic and professional trajectory... I mean, I, a permanent professor at ScPo Paris and I have no idea of the 'maquette pédagogique' -the themes covered as part of a Masters' programme.'* (PCT 5). It also doesn't justify the fact that *'the students are not given enough time to digest what they learn in the class and are provided with not enough pastoral and tutorial assistance while they are constantly told that they are excellent and so are deprived from a chance to fail'* (PCT 1). Neither does it justify the fact that *'students' evaluations are taken as the main quality assurance process... and you don't know who has access to the academics' ranking that is based on students' evaluations'* (PCT 2).

⁵⁷ Foreword to 'Professional life in modern British higher education', ed. by Bryan Cunningham (2014).

These undermine the delivery of real pedagogy which is *'about passing on the knowledge of a discipline to a student and help them become independent and confident in that field, this means that there must be a real focus on teaching and learning processes and objectives and a coherence across and within offers which is not the case at the moment at ScPo Paris...it's a real pity'* (PCT 1).

5.4.2. Sciences Po Paris: junior contractual academics' perceptions of quality

Perhaps it is for the sake of subverting the power of the State and escaping the complications of dealing with nominated permanent academics that ScPo has opted for hiring more than 90% of its teaching staff on short-term contractual basis. This way, *'if they do not adhere to the in-house frames, then you simply say ciao'* (PCT 7).

Of course, none of the three contractual academics who participated in this study were told to go away. On the contrary, all said that they are passionate about teaching and their experience has been very fulfilling. Additionally, students' evaluations of their courses have been very positive. All three had taught in other institutions including the LSE and kept comparing them with their experiences at ScPo.

One thing that they all referred to, without me even asking, was their own employment process which they thought undermines the quality of teaching at ScPo. They all said that *'everything happened over phone conversations or emails with professors or the 'responsable pédagogique' and that the institution was not involved in any of these exchanges. One of them added:*

PCT 18: *'at the LSE, you have to send your CV, a motivation letter, your intentions for teaching.... then you have an interview at the School, and you do not set your feet in a class until 200 people have reviewed and approved your application as a graduate teaching assistant (GTA) while at ScPo Paris I got the job through emails with a professor who knew me and the administration was only involved when they paid for my tickets'.*

Therefore, unlike the LSE, ScPo cannot or it may be fair to say is not willing to secure equality of opportunity through 'careful monitoring and regulation of recruitment and promotion procedures' (Swift, 2006:100) because this could undermine the power of its network of graduates, alumni, and the political elite who want to teach at the School. Here, visibility will be a trap for the central watchtower rather than the inmates of the panopticon.

Following their initial comments, all three interviewees expressed their surprise over the authority and freedom of the teaching assistants (TAs) at ScPo and the fact that *'no guideline was provided by the school regarding the teaching, assessment, and the content...no one actually checked either'* (PCT 18), and neither did the *'school provide any training on time and class management or syllabus design...nothing'* (PCT 14). As a result, all three *'felt anxious and lonely'* and *'taught in ways that in the hindsight they think were not relevant to the level of the students or their expectations'* (PCT 13). One participant added:

PCT 14: '... their induction programme was utterly irrelevant to my teaching practice...because it was mostly about using computers and logging in and out of your account... on top of that...later on... there was no structural coordination mechanism among the TAs who worked with the same professor which was confusing for us and the students as well...besides there was no formal peer review or gathering where you could get to know other TAs from other courses in the school...no communication really....and if anything happened it was only informal...'

From the above comments, it is evident that ScPo has failed in creating a community of practice among contractual academics. A lack of common guidelines or training for novice teachers not only bears negative affective impacts on both students and teachers but it also deprives the academics from 'a set of restricted code... where immediacy of the relationship is stressed' (Bernstein, 2003:59). In fact, 'colleagues forced to associate with one another to effect general or liberal education are more likely to develop a sense of common profession than those who operate in airtight compartments' (Clark, 1983:93) as

is the case with ScPo contractual academics.

However, it seems to me that institutional activities that are judged to be chaotic or due to a lack of insight among the managers, are in fact very well planned under the surface. The situation at ScPo manifests itself as another example of the French national *laissez-faire* approach and their national educational strategy of '*debrouillez-vous*': figure it out yourself. However, underneath this approach there is a real capitalist benefit for the School. The contractual academics form a *secondary labour market* who are less skilled and lower paid compared to permanent academics and are easily replaceable by the very nature of their contracts and the informal methods of employment. ScPo draws at least two direct economic benefits from this labour market. Firstly, they call for little to nothing of capital investment in the form of training and education as they are hired and fired along the vagaries of the School's business cycle. Secondly, they provide a buffer 'that allows the organisation to expand output in good times and to contract in bad, leaving the organisation's operating core and elite primary labour force relatively unaffected' (Morgan, 2006:302).

But this approach may potentially have degrading impacts on these academics, the students, and the quality of the educational offer. In the absence of teaching and pastoral support systems, for instance, all three interviewees looked for ways to cope with the situation: one '*talked to their mother who was a teacher in their country*' (PCT 13); the other '*talked to their peers in the other university where they held monthly meetings*' (PCT 18); and the last one '*asked students' opinion on the ways they best learnt or how they preferred to be assessed*' (PCT 14). From an organisational point of view, the anxiety and stress of these junior academics exert a negative influence on coalition building and subverts coherence and harmony across the School and its offerings.

Lack of a coherent and overarching quality framework bears several other impacts. For instance, '*the quality of the courses, professors, and TAs at ScPo Paris is completely random...besides people who teach at ScPo are mostly professionals who teach by sharing their experiences in anecdotes, at the LSE they are mostly academics...it makes a huge difference in terms of quality of*

teaching... (PCT 18). And besides *'when you are not given clear standardised instructions as a young teacher... eventually you end up wondering how you can be fair to students in your assessment...I mean the French students love their exposé (PowerPoint presentation), they have been brainwashed into it...it is the only way they can show off their individual superiority...but if you are a student from Singapore or the US...you don't necessarily see this as the ONLY way to learn a topic...so changing pedagogical approaches inside a university like ScPo Paris is not only a challenge on the managerial side but it also a difficult...aaa...task to change students' minds ...'* (PCT 14). The good news is *'no guideline means freedom to do what you want to do...so I talked to my mom who is a very good teacher back home...and I said what the heck...I am not going to oblige all students to do the exposé thing...I changed it to a collective debate and it was a fantastic experience'*.

These comments reveal that the world of these academics in ScPo is far from the daily lives of the British academics whose daily practice is saturated with a Foucauldian panopticon surveillance. In the absence of clear academic standards, the academics at ScPo feel anxiety and stress, adopt coping strategies, and move like swarms between these strategies and their passion for teaching. In the absence of the gaze, they form their identities sometimes as detached disinterested individuals, and sometimes as revolutionary 'progressiste' teachers who oppose the dominant philosophies of the School and the students. As part of their revolt, perhaps, they were more eager to participate in my study compared to their counterparts at the LSE for whom 'quality' has attained banality. The last comment above is reminiscent of Nietzsche's assertion that 'humans have a will to power' and personally reminded me of Schmeller (1847) *Carmina Burana*:

*'Burning inside with violent anger,
Bitterly I speak to my heart,
Created from matter, of the ashes of the elements, I am like a leaf played
by the wind
If it is the way of wise man,
to build foundations on stone,
I am a fool, like a flowing stream.'*

The next part delineates academics' perceptions at the LSE.

5.4.3. The LSE: senior academics' perceptions of quality

The overall message detected from interviews with senior academics at the LSE is that they support the internal quality system of the School because *'it is only very rational for the School to provide a high quality offer for its fee-paying students'* (PCT 16) *'by investing in the human capital at the school and by improving academics' skills and competencies through different modes of training, committee meetings, annual awards, or even by organising the informal outings we usually have with other academics and students'* (PCT 19). And so *'as inauthentic as some of the procedures may sound, the mechanisms at the LSE do create collective interests towards maintaining quality...you know you become one of the ants that is taking food home for everyone else in the nest'* (PCT 17).

This indicates several factors. The image of the 'ant' connotes to a shared code in which each member has a responsibility as part of a collective organisation. In turn, it creates a sense of belonging and a functional interdependence that was missing in the case of ScPo academics. Additionally, since all ants are equal inmates in the panopticon, they see positive aspects in the quality standards that are 'directed at institutions as a whole; the opposite happens when those systems are directed at individual academics' performance (Rosa et al. 2012:364). From a Foucauldian perspective, it means 'what is arbitrary has become normalised, what is demanded, the subject demands of itself' (Mann, 2008:118).

Of course academics' positions demonstrated different degrees of acceptance and adaptation as previous studies have also shown, e.g., (Newton, 2000; Westerheijden et al., 2007). For instance, their opinions were divided when it came to students' evaluations. One participant said:

PCT 17: 'I think it is helpful for the seminars and lectures to receive

students' evaluation but what is the impact of these evaluations on the students themselves? ... does it help them really? ... you see...I think students' evaluations are useful but to a certain degree...my question is a very existential one...does this system of students' evaluation really enhance quality of their learning or does it only message quality of the School and so attracts more fee-paying students...'

This comment connotes to a concern among academics in several studies (Harvey & Newton, 2004; Rosa et al., 2006; Teelken & Lomas, 2009) over the fact that QA mechanisms in Europe have not improved students' learning experiences to a great extent. It also refers to the fact, that students' evaluations may be part of the marketing strategy at the LSE rather than a tool for real enhancement of academics' practices and students' learning. Underlying this concern, is perhaps a question of the identity of academics that is reconstructed under the increasingly intrusive gaze of the institutions and their students. As Deer (2003) explains, in England the interests of students and the HEIs have combined to undermine traditional academic values and as a result the whole profession has felt the strain.

Of course the two other participants saw more positive than negative impacts in students' evaluation. For instance, one participant said:

PCT 16: '...students' evaluations are interesting often gratifying, occasionally a bit more unsettling ... but on the whole that they are useful ... and you know students are pretty good at evaluating what is good teaching and what is not good teaching.'

All participants referred to the usefulness of the annual programme review and committee meetings and considered that the presence of external assessors from other universities as well as student representatives were helpful in scrutinising the quality of the programmes and helped progress in teaching and research at the School. One participant added:

PCT 19: '...so as a new member of the teaching staff at the LSE, you may have slightly reduced teaching hours, slightly reduced administrative

responsibilities so that you can focus on developing your research portfolio, you would have major review after the first five years as to see whether or not... your ten years was agreed to and then only after that you can start getting more teaching responsibilities...so I felt the School really supported me in this regard.'

Several reflections can be developed based on the above comments. One is that a culture of departmental meetings- in which issues are democratically discussed and voted for- has remained intact from the time when Clark (1983:112) pointed out this particular characteristic in the English HEIs. This is a characteristic that divides the British and the French HE systems as in the latter 'a typical bureaucrat is spatially separated from faculty and even on coffee breaks interacts with other administrators' (Clark, 1983:149). Furthermore, quality control in the British HE has been based on peer surveillance at Clark's time and it still is today, at least at the LSE. Colleagues share critical comments on one another's teaching and research and hence are involved in a permanent self-formation. While 'challenging the calibre of peers can be seen as a way of reversing the gaze and resisting domination' (Morley, 2003:114), the process remains productive for both peers involved.

Speaking of support systems that are in place for academics, two of the participants judged the annual excellence award and the activities of the TLC as empowering and positive. One participant said:

PCT 16: 'I think the school is very clear in what it wants from teaching and research at the school and so once when I had a personal problem that I thought was having a negative impact on my teaching...well I simply had a chat with the department's director and then we set a date with the people from the Teaching and Learning Centre...and so I had a mentor and it helped me a lot at the time...you know in mentally being able to deal with my teaching and my personal issue...'

This is in line with the findings of RQ2 about the LSE providing pastoral care and training for its academics and demonstrates the positive impacts these may have. The above comment also indicates that capabilities of academics in

delivering a course is judged against and governed by conditions that are non-negotiable and as a result create a panopticon in which all inmates consciously adhere to norms and procedures. Furthermore, this reveals that quality mechanisms activate and exploit a range of feelings including shame, guilt, loyalty, and responsabilisation as Morley (2003:87) asserts. It demonstrates capillary power that such systems produce 'as we become dominated by the process itself' and as 'the quest for efficiency tend to become our new slave drivers' (Morgan, 2006:296).

In this regard, one of the participants had an interesting opinion to share:

PCT 17: '...you see one of my colleagues won that excellence award...personally it reminded me of the Mcdonald's employee of the month award...but then I talked to that colleague and realised that they had mixed feeling...so there was this anxiety to keep up the good work...but of course this person was also extremely proud and happy...and so I don't know if that's because the mood is different or it's because this new generation of younger faculty just accept these mechanisms as part of life...I don't know really but it seems to work well for everyone so I better keep my opinions to myself...'

Based on all above comments, it is evident that an internal QE scheme is well established and clearly communicated with academics and despite concerns over their true impact on students' learning, a majority of the senior academics who participated in this study stated that they saw positive elements arising from the quality processes.

5.4.4. The LSE: junior academics' perceptions of quality

The responses of junior academics were more coherent in the sense that they all found the schools' employment approach 'very clear but very long too' (PCT 20); they thought 'the fact that they check your syllabus means you really make an effort to do research and update your course...and that applies to everyone...so even if you are a professor it's not like... well OK...I'll just dust off what I've been teaching for 30 years and stand up for the lecture and talk at them' (PCT 3) ;and besides 'you know they are watching you but at same time

supporting you...so you just follow the rules' (PCT 15).

These comments manifest the productive impacts of the quality panopticon that is in place at the LSE. The last comment by PCT 15 is interesting as it reveals that 'academics know how "to play the game" and thereby subvert these control mechanisms' (Teelkan & Lomas, 2009: 262). This same participant continued by saying: *'you sense you are part of a sect and you have to do certain rituals without really believing in them... but then I think for our generation that is somehow brainwashed into these sort of systems...well I have talked to my friends...you know...so I think it's really reassuring for us...'*

In the same vein, another participant welcomed the coherent quality system across all activities at the School and said:

PCT 18: '...so at the LSE they want to make sure that everyone teaches at the same level and with the same quality not necessarily with the same style, you may feel that you are not that free to do what you want but then as a new teacher do you really want to do what you want... I was freer at ScPo compared to the LSE... but unsure and insecure.... and in the hindsight, I know I would have done many things differently although my teaching received a good feedback from students.'

This is further evidence that the normative nature of institutional quality codes creates a sense of belonging and confidence, particularly among novice teachers. For instance, one participant said:

PCT 3: '... for instance there is a course called LSE100...it's obligatory for all students...it's an introductory course to help them think like social scientists...and so everything about this course ... the reading list ... the syllabus ... the whole course is prepared by the School and you just go there and you have to teach what is already there ... but you still feel free and confident to teach with your own style because you have already been trained to teach ... and then you have the feedback on the course...and you have people who check on you...'

Hence, *'you see that there is a real consistency across different courses at LSE'* (PCT 20) and even though *'sometimes you feel like it is more about window-dressing'* (PCT15), one knows *'everything is formal and the convener looks after your back'* (PCT 3) and so *'things are not messy as they are at ScPo ... I mean courses got cancelled...people didn't show up... TAs didn't even know each other...you didn't know what the exam will be like...no, no, the LSE is a complete different world'* (PCT 18). Besides, *'they are very sophisticated in changing courses and updating is done all the time...so that's another important part of quality processes at the LSE'* (PCT 20).

All these comments reveal that the quality code at the LSE bears a positive impact on the daily practices of junior academics. By maintaining clarity and continuity in communication, the gaze clarifies these young academics' duties as equal inmates in the panopticon.

To conclude and answer **RQ3. on the academics' perception of quality at the LSE and ScPo**, it is important to note that educational quality at ScPo is left to the *voluntarism* of academics while at the LSE a real machinery is in place to accommodate the demands of the students and enhance quality.

As it was observed, despite some disenchantments among senior faculty members at the LSE, the general culture of quality at the School is appreciated by both senior and junior academics. It provides them with a clear frame of reference and guides their activities and therefore they consider that the quality standards are, in general, *'empowering and egalitarian'* (PCT3). At ScPo, a lack of a clear quality framework as well as the School's non-transparent policy in how students' evaluations are used has created a sense of *'resentment and anxiety'* (PCT 1) among both senior and junior academics. The junior academics are not empowered by this institutional policy and feel excluded and uncertain in their practice.

CHAPTER SIX: REFLECTIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

6.1. Reflections

Based on the conceptual framework of this study, it is evident that QA initiatives of the EHEA may be reproduced only to the extent they facilitate local power relations. Within the national sphere, there is a shared perception of quality which is negotiated between the national bureaucratic institution, their funding and accountability policies and discourses on the one hand, and the HEIs' autonomy and internal quality management, on the other. As Ulrich (2006:343) explains in these local contexts 'no single player or opponent can ever win on their own, they are dependent on alliances'. There might be some hegemonic struggle as was the case between the French universities and the State, or in the case of the vice chancellors and quality mechanisms in England. However, all local actors are linked and operate in a quasi-market environment where they negotiate their roles, identities, and the norms that differentiate their position and authority. In fact, there is no argument over the existence of norms, the power struggles are more about whose interest is better reflected in those norms.

If panopticon simply means that there are norms and regulations that govern the HEIs and that these norms are internalised by HEIs as they are under surveillance and external forms of scrutiny, then the quality panopticon has surely been created in both France and England. But does that mean the inmates in the panopticon are powerless subjects who mechanically serve systems of power? Foucault said Yes, the outcomes of this study critiques his answer. The points that distinguish Foucault's panopticon from the panopticon model elaborated in the conceptual framework of this study are discussed below.

For Foucault powerlessness was structured into inmates' existence. His panopticon was not empowering for the inmates who internalised the external norms. He considered this disciplinary power has infected all major social institutions and was producing obedient and productive subjects. What is missing in his view of power is the *autonomy of the subjects*. This is what makes his panopticon a one-way model. He does not recognise that inmates in the panopticon are autonomous subjects who can influence and change power relations, that they can be agents of change, and that power is a negotiable truth.

For him, power -and not agency of the inmates- is at the source of all relations and this power divides the authority and the role of those in the central watchtower and the inmates. His panopticon only empowers the central watchtower: the gaze. The panopticon, for him, is an instrument of social control with no benefits for the watched.

The outcomes of this study challenges Foucault's reading of power and agency of the subjects. The findings of RQ1 and RQ2 demonstrated that local political bureaucracies and HEIs are agents of reform and may resist external power by different strategies including, for instance, delaying their adoption. This was the case in France and the late establishment of the first quality agency in 2006 as was discussed. Likewise, the binary divide that is safeguarded in France was discarded in England both with the same goal of maintaining the power of the State and the elite. In RQ1, academics in both contexts reacted to former shapes of external quality assurance, i.e. the grading system in France and the subject review in England and forced both national quality agencies to step back and change their evaluation strategies. Similarly, in RQ2 it was observed that the word 'quality' was replaced with 'evaluation' only to avoid further resistance from French academics and universities. In RQ3, senior academics' voluntary inaction at ScPo has slowed down attempts of the central administration in creating departments and at the LSE academics have an alliance with the central administration and have their say in quality enhancement through different committees.

Therefore, no matter how tight the quality panopticon grabs HEIs and its people, they have their mechanisms to negotiate and subvert the power of the gaze. In fact, they do so as they occupy and share the central watchtower with other actors. Foucault's panopticon God is dead. The central watchtower is now home to multiple Gods including the students, the quality agencies, the national regulatory bodies such as HEFCE, for example. In the case of England, the students are increasingly occupying the central watchtower, while in France the State and the political elite still grab hold of their historical power and their modern reproduction means, i.e., the grandes écoles.

What is evident in both cases of French and English HE is this: as God has left the scene all the inmates live in a world of risk. This is how the evaluative State justifies its activities and paves its way towards more power. Of course, the French State is still in its early stages of an evaluative State and as was discussed has been using softer approaches to reduce chances of power struggle with academics and universities. In England, God has long been absent and this has pushed for elaborated risk-management schemes, aggressive marketing, and competition across the system. What is common in both HE systems is that 'key institutions of modernity including the universities are suspects and sources of risk', as Ulrich (2006) explained. Therefore, everyone should communicate, coordinate, and compete to have a space in the central watchtower because the power now lies with those who can define risk. Anyone who still believes in God is hence a risk atheist and does not belong in the watchtower.

The above reflection implies the following: a) Foucault's panopticon does not allow resistance and negotiations. On the contrary, this study's conceptual framework allows the gaze to simultaneously belong to multiple actors who resist and object to one another's decision and power; b) Foucault's panopticon was not empowering, this study's conceptualisation of a panopticon is; and c) Foucault's panopticon was a one-way power relation between the tower and the inmates, in this study power is even more distributed with any inmate having the power to watch others.

More importantly, this study showed that the more developed the quality panopticon is, the more confident are its inmates. It was clearly observed that in the case of ScPo academics, lack of clear academic standards, pastoral care, and training on pedagogy had a crippling effect on their practice. Interestingly, even the senior academics at ScPo were keen to work based on an egalitarian and clear institutional quality framework. The junior academics in both the LSE and ScPo were even more in need of a norm-setting quality panopticon to guide their early steps towards a high-quality teaching practice.

In the absence of norms and pastoral care, all ScPo academics adopted coping strategies and relied on different sources of support and their own

performativity to teach. Perhaps the fact that the chargé de mission cracked under a heavy load of responsibility and left ScPo is an example of how lack of an overarching clear standard leads to disempowerment and inefficiency of the whole system while everyone at ScPo is working harder and for longer hours in the secluded departments and schools.

This was not the case at the LSE. The quality panopticon was a beast that had to be fed by constantly. There were some eligible doubts about the real impact of quality norms on students' learning and on the practice of academics as they learnt how to play the game. Nonetheless, the academics and heads of departments considered the school's quality panopticon as empowering and egalitarian and with a positive effect on their daily practice. This finding can be complementary to a study by Luke (1997) that showed more accountability and transparency inherent in QA mechanism have provided new opportunities for women and other marginalised groups in higher education in Australia.

Based on the above arguments, this study holds that Foucault's panopticon fails to distinguish acceptable and unacceptable forms of power. And so do many studies that have judged external and internal QA mechanisms as panoptic power models in which academics' practice is not transformed as they perform according to regulations, e.g., (Newton, 2002; Morley 2003 Laughton, 2003; Stensaker et al., 2011). The English HE system is more akin to the model panopticon but Foucault could not predict that it would result in a better outcome. It failed to assume that the more extensive surveillance of HE quality in England has not been all bad news.

This study did. It did so by adopting a conceptual framework that showed even power itself is an inmate of the panopticon. It is negotiated, altered, redefined, and redistributed as patterns of HE systems change. It also did so by reflecting the voices of the inmates. I knew some of the comments may be considered as another instance of the recent French-bashings and that the French side's reactions could be somehow similar to my native compatriots who would, at any similar occasion, immediately take their ancient kings 'Darius and Korous' out of the grave as a witness to their prestige and supremacy.

Nonetheless, I reflected what was the lived experiences of participants in both HE systems and institutions with integrity and honesty. There were many occasions that their comments were against my personal experiences at ScPo. But as Voltaire's statue looks over my shoulders every time I pass the centre of our small town, I knew 'I could disapprove with what they said, but I was ready to defend it to death'.

Generally speaking, though, my personal and professional experience also confirm the outcomes of this study. I have been privileged to work with teachers in developing countries and have witnessed how by keeping the best of their students' interest at heart they tactfully resist and undo the official curriculum or the social norms- I remember my own primary teachers did so. But, I have also learnt that while we reject one panopticon, we create others only to prove that 'civilisation is a hopeless race to discover remedies for the evils it produces' as Rousseau had said. In his *Persian Letters*, Montesquieu says: 'This king is a magician; He exercises his empire over the very spirit of his subjects, he makes them think as he wishes'. Based on the findings of this study and the fact that the French society is defining layers of new regulations only to abide with its aristocratic elitist past, I assume that this king (the State) has more panopticon power over its subjects in the 'Aristocratic Republic of France' compared to the 'Republican Monarchy of England'.

I have three more reflections to share.

The first one is to clarify whether and how the panopticon metaphor can still be relevant and useful given its conceptualisation in the study. My short answer is yes based on the following arguments. Firstly, the components of the original Foucauldian panopticon, i.e., the watchtower, the inmates, the existence of layered and distributed power and norms are all still evident in the conceptual framework of this study which reflected the current governance of higher education and its quality in the two cases. Secondly, that- as I have argued- the watchtower may be occupied by more than one interest group supports the very existence of the watchtower and is in line with the Foucauldian notion of distributed power where the quality machinery assures difference, dissymmetry, and disequilibrium and it doesn't matter who is running the machine as long as

its norms are internalised by all interest groups involved. As Sheridan (1977:197) explained: 'the more numerous those anonymous and temporary observers are, the greater the risk for the inmate of being surprised and the greater his anxious awareness of being observed'.

The panopticon model developed in this study reiterates the tenets of Foucauldian panopticon and modifies it based on the current state of affairs in QA mechanisms. It operates based on the freedom of its inmates (HEIs and their academics), transparent negotiations and communications, common-sense values (of quality and accountability and customer service) thus facilitating the internalisation of such norms into the collective conscious of all interest groups. It is, therefore, a reflection of how QA systems function through the power of a panopticon in today's multi-actor higher education systems. A prisoner with an electronic ankle bracelet is still a prisoner whose actions are regulated although not located in the prison. In a similar vein, the fact that quality norms exist and are negotiated among different powerful interest groups indicates the relevance and the usefulness of the panopticon as a metaphor.

The second reflection is an update to Clark's triangle of coordination. I have already proposed modifications to the interest groups at each angle of the triangle in the conceptual framework. Here I am reverting to Clark's original 1983 model to propose an update. As shown in Figure 9 below, he placed the French and the British HE in certain positions.

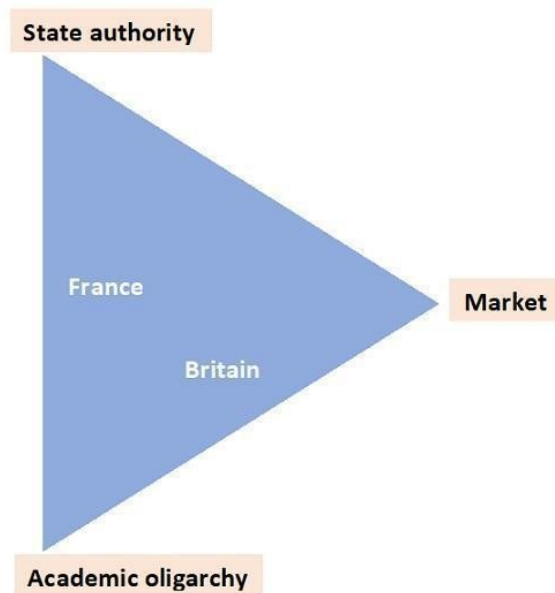


Figure 9. Clark's triangle of coordination

Based on the findings and the conceptual framework of the study, I have been able to locate and tweak the place of the French and the English HE as shown in Figure 10 below. As observed, the French HE has moved towards the market and the English HE (as part of the British HE) has moved a bit closer to a coordination point between the State and the market. In both cases academic oligarchy is reduced while the role of students and quality agencies- as part of the market- has increased.

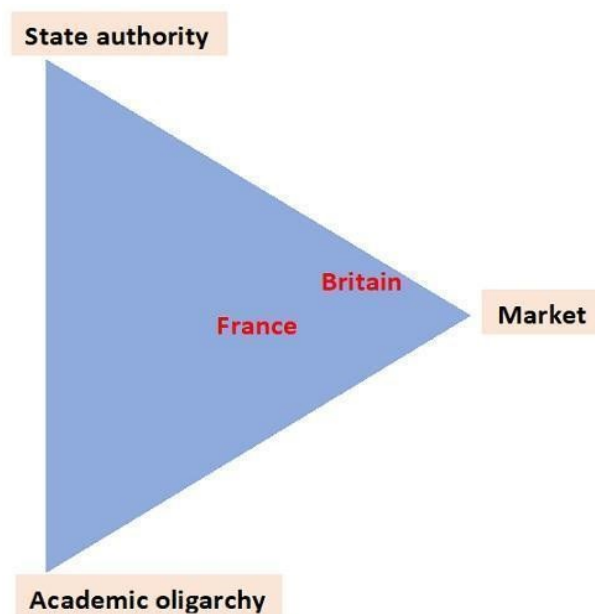


Figure 10. Modifications to Clark's triangle

As my last reflection, I'd like to wear another one of my hats. As a private pilot, I am trained on risk management and I practise it at every stage of a flight. But apart from the information on the weather of the day and some basic safety rules, pilots do not feel obliged to share a minute-by-minute report of the risks to the passengers. That is, unless there is a major risk and even then, the golden rule is 'to pilot, to pilot, to pilot' and then to communicate with the tower and later with the passengers, if necessary. I think, the role of the pilot and the passengers could be adopted to the relationship between the academics, the HEIs, and their students. Of course students should have their say, but their real goal of being at a university, i.e., learning, shall not be overtaken by a consumerist surveillance frenzy.

6.2. Further Research

While I lived with my thesis, I developed several ideas for further research based on this study. It would be interesting to divide academics based on their gender instead of the type of their contracts, for instance. It would be also of interest to see the impact of the increasing number of international students at ScPo and the ways their power dynamics could eventually change internal quality approaches. A historical review of elements of change in French and English HE, in addition to quality, is another idea I had. At the LSE, my personal question was where to next? Has the lecture had its day? are there different other ways for teaching and assessing? Therefore, a research on innovation capacities at the LSE could be an interesting idea. I also thought that a comparative research on students' experiences in both places is a worthwhile endeavour and complementary to the findings of this research. This study could also be conducted using other approaches and methods. For instance, quality could be delineated from a Weberian perspective to understand to what extent it represents values, traditions, and rational social actions. And finally, if ScPo happened to adopt a QA mechanism similar to the LSE, how would it affect its position at the local and the global market.

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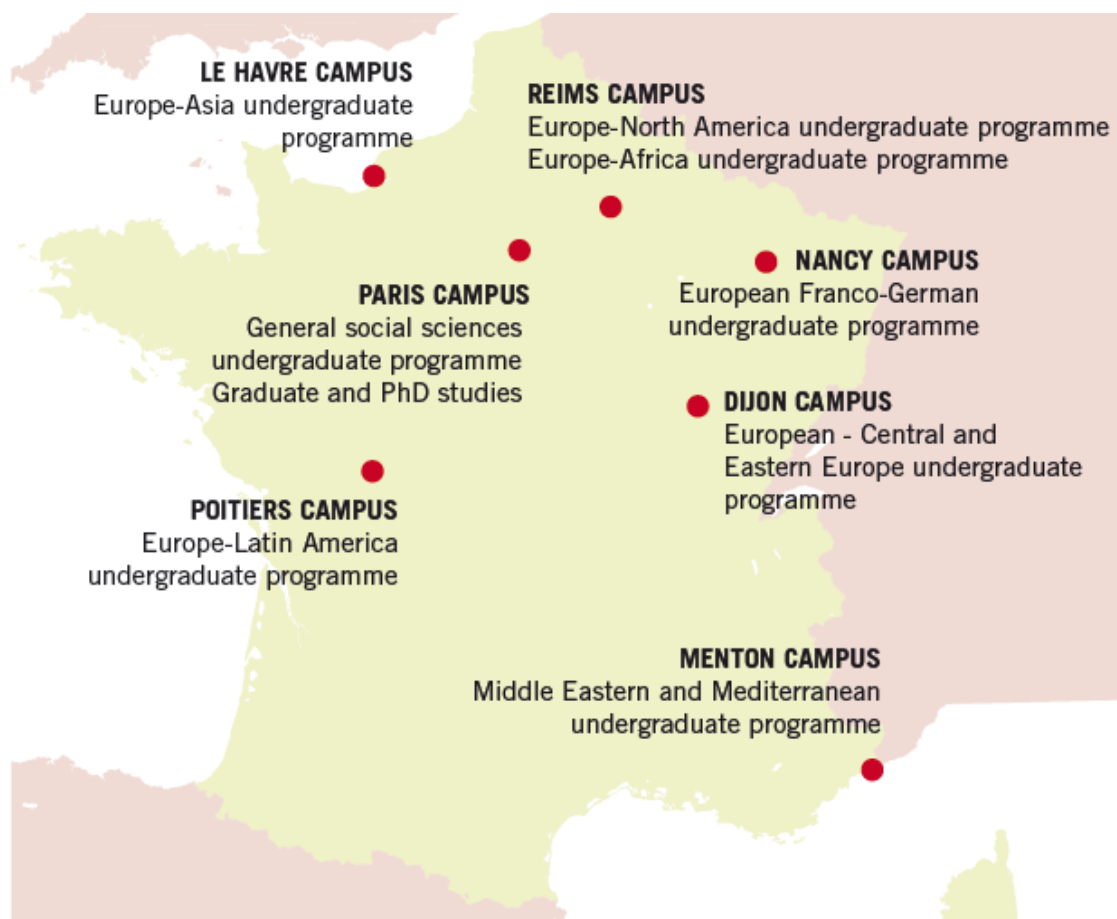
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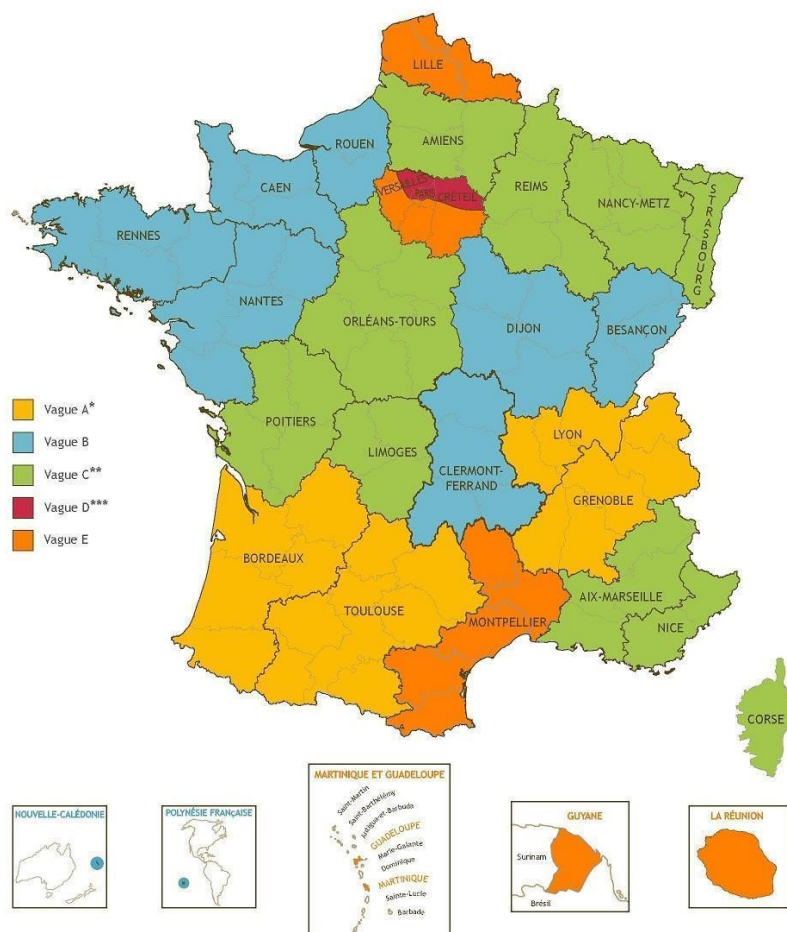
APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Sciences Po institutions around France



Appendix 2. AERES evaluation waves in France

Cycle quinquennal des vagues annuelles d'évaluation
dans le champ de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche
(Présentation par académie)



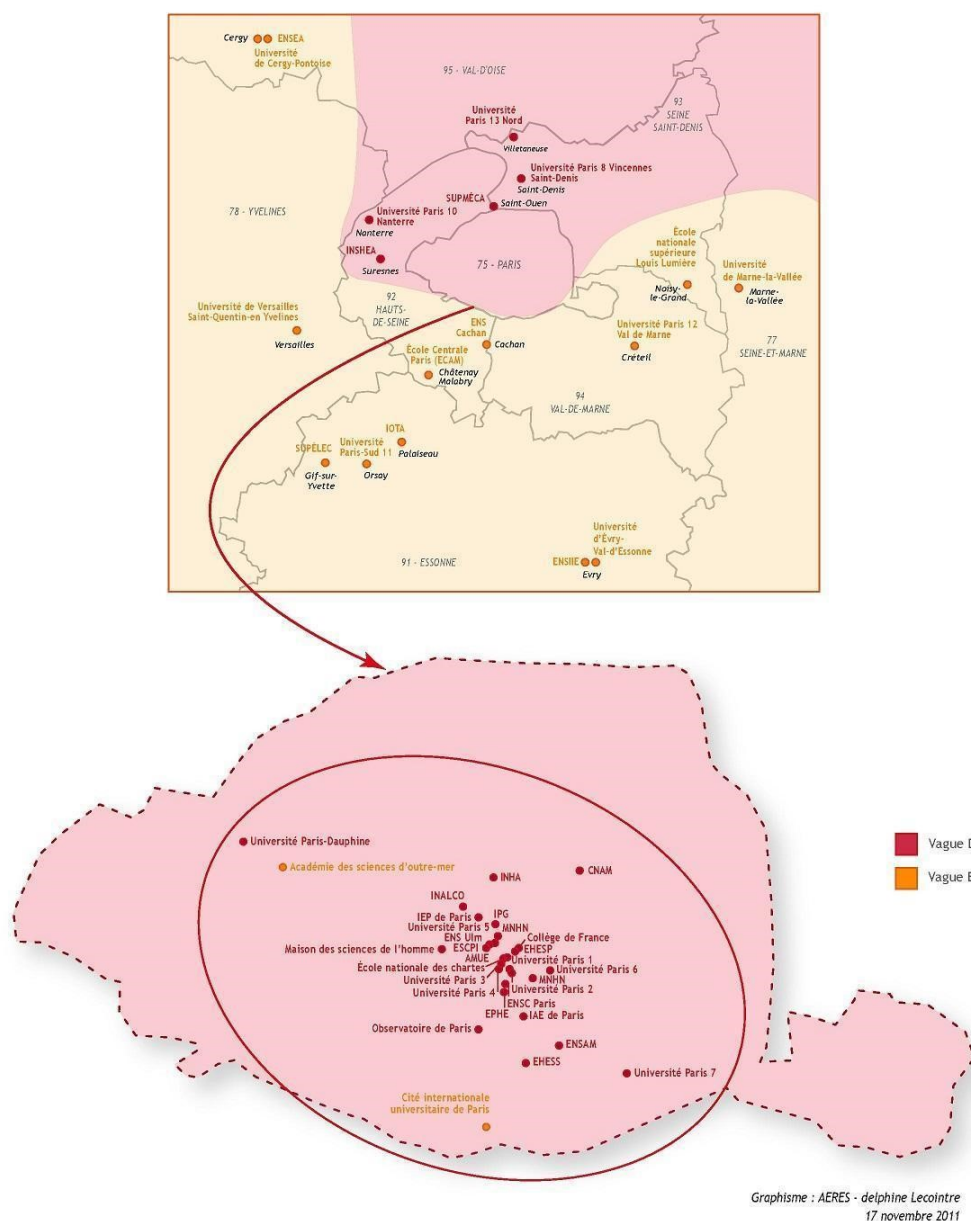
* Le GIP AMUE et le CNFM GIP (Groupement d'intérêt public pour la coordination nationale de la formation en microélectronique et nanotechnologies) contractualiseront avec la vague A.

** Sauf pour l'Université de Technologie de Troyes appartenant à la vague B.

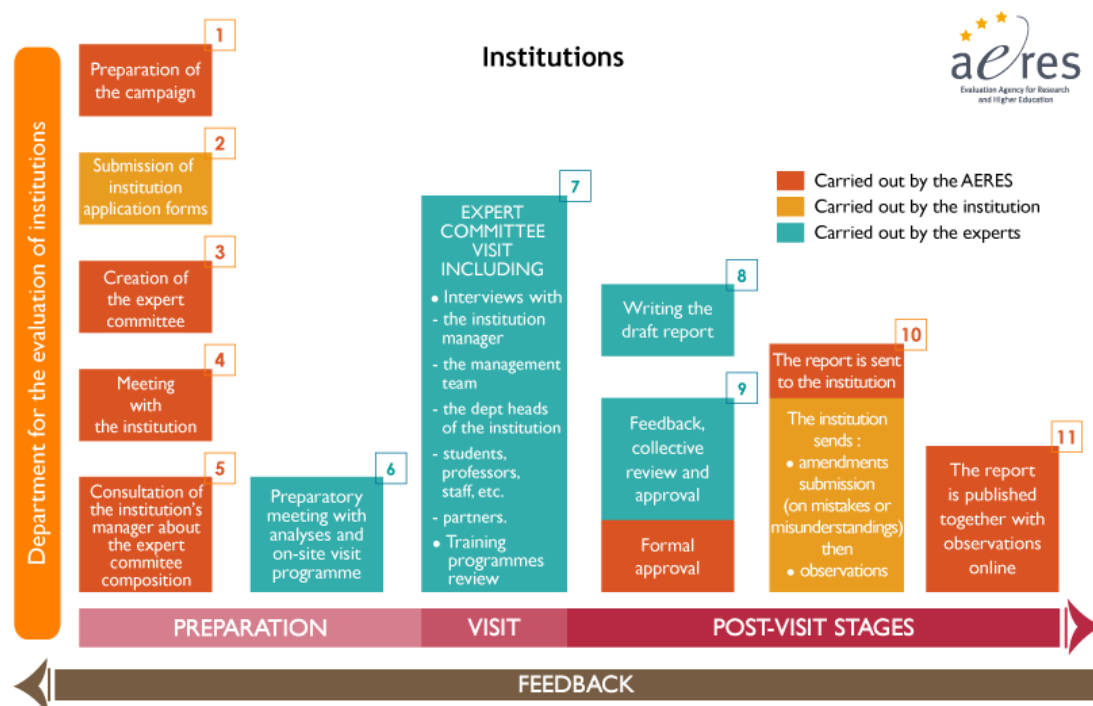
*** Sauf pour 2 établissements appartenant à la vague E : l'Académie des sciences de l'outre-mer et la Cité internationale universitaire de Paris.

Graphisme : AERES - delphine Lecointre
17 novembre 2011

**Cycle quinquennal des vagues annuelles d'évaluation (vagues D et E)
dans le champ de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche
en Ile de France, avec focus sur Paris**



Appendix 3. AERES evaluation cycles



October 2012

Appendix 4. The Interview Schedule

No.	National Case	Institution	Interviewees	date (2015)	duration	language/ method
1	France	Hcéres	manager	17 March	1:05	French/ face to face
2	France	ScPo	QA manager	26 March	56:00	French/ face to face
3	England	QAA	manager	13 April	1:01	English/ SKYPE
4	France/	ScPo	Dept manager	16 April	1:03	French/face to face
5	England/	LSE	QA manager	16 April	1:02	English/ SKYPE
6	France/	ScPo	senior academic	28 April	00:55	English/ face to face
7	France/	ScPo	junior academic	29 April	1:01	English/ face to face
8	France/	ScPo	junior academic	29 April	00:53	English/ face to face
9	France/	Scpo	senior academic	5 May	1:02	English/face to face
10	England	LSE	junior academic	14 May	1:04	English/ SKYPE
11	England	LSE	junior academic	15 May	00:56	English/ SKYPE
12	England	LSE	Dept manager	18 May	00:58	English/ SKYPE
13	France	ScPO	junior academic	18 May	00:59	English/ face to face
14	England	QAA	manager	19 May	1:02	English/ SKYPE
15	France	ScPo	senior academic	20 May	1:00	French/ face to face
16	England	LSE	senior academic	21 May	00:52	English/ SKYPE
17	England	LSE	senior academic	22 May	00:54	English/ SKYPE
18	England	LSE	senior academic	24 May	1:01	French/ face to face
19	England	LSE	junior academic	25 May	1:03	English/SKYPE
20	France	Hcéres	manager	26 May	1:02	French/ face to face

Appendix 5. A sample extract from an interview: The case of England

Interviewee: one other thing, before I forget it, which I wanted to mention to you which I don't think that it fits with your quality appraisal...not exactly, but in terms of actual....how we look for quality in students. Well, I think it does actually fit your theme. When we select our candidates, when we make our choice of candidates for the programme we either meet in person....aaa... we usually have a marathon teleconference call where we have looked at all the...each application form.... we have looked at the application and their references, their grades, and their personal statements and everything and then we go through it at great length for each candidate and then we decide. But what is very interesting to see is this different sort of criteria that the French colleagues have that they're doing what I'd call more of a... well they are looking for technical skills going through a sort of box-ticking like: has a student done an internship? has the student got certain technical and computer skills? what are the the students' math scores like? would you believe!?

Interviewer: Interesting point...yes, yes I believe you!

Interviewee: I leave my temper and I say don't tell me about math scores, nobody's interested in.... in Britain nobody is remotely interested in your math scores employers aren't interested , universities aren't interested, nobody wants to study math and I couldn't care less what their math scores....because we are not anyway admitting them into an advanced quantitative masters' programme...one is that the courses are very humanities based actually and the other is that they are not hard science...they are soft social sciences...you know...so I'm saying don't tell me about math scores and I'm very British in that way and I am much more...I go straight for the personal statement , the 'lettre de motivation' that my French counterparts are less interested in. I want a very personal, very sort of textured, something with originality, creativity in it and even some extricity to it.... something that make somebody just interesting and make me want to meet this person. I'm not looking for an automaton who can tick every box and who's got every computer skills and has got good math scores...i'm just not interested in that kind of person...who would just want to get a job in a waterhouse or whatever...I just want a person who is keen to learn and enlarge their mind, someone who has some kind of intellectual enthusiasm that they may pursue it in their own time and for example if they are interested in history, do they go to listen to great historians give a public lecture... I'm just not interested in these kinds of technical, career advancing statements.

Appendix 6. A sample extract from an interview: The case of France

Interviewer: et donc, vous dites qu'il y a une sorte de complexité...que l'assurance qualité est un sujet sensible?

Interviewee: Oui, tout à fait. Même dans la dernière loi de juillet 2013, vous l'avez lue, je commence aussi par la connaître, on a quand même du mal à trouver des références directes à l'assurance qualité, il n'y en a pas beaucoup ou bien il faut vraiment lire entre les lignes. Cela vaut tout dire. Comment dire, je donne mon propre avis, mais je ne crois pas me tromper, il n'y pas de directives nationales concernant l'assurance qualité, concernant les processus d'évaluation d'assurance qualité, de mise en place de services de l'assurance qualité que ce soit en interne ou en externe. Il n'y en a pas non plus pour une autre raison.

L'autre raison est que les universités sont autonomes depuis la loi 2007, la loi de liberté et de responsabilité des universités, le ministère a dit aux universités vous voulez être autonomes, Ok, vous aurez plus d'autonomie, d'abord vous nous demanderez moins de choses, et puis vous pouvez faire ce que vous voulez, et si vous voulez être autonomes vous allez vous trouver dans un système compétitif et de concurrence. Il faut dire les choses, derrière cette loi, il y'a l'idée que les universités veulent prouver qu'elles sont grandes et qu'elles peuvent faire des choses, bon allez-y. Mais s'il y en a une qui a plus d'étudiants que l'autre il faut bien être visible de Shanghai, visible dans les rankings, le fameux choc de Shanghai. Ce qui est une aberration et une absurdité totale. Personne dans les universités françaises ne sait ce que c'est le classement Shanghai. Un universitaire sur dix seulement, peut être sait ce que sont les critères de classement de Shanghai, les autres ne le savent pas. Tout le monde parle de classement de Shanghai (répété 3 fois) mais personne ne sait ce qu'il y'a véritablement dedans. Passons.

Alors, voilà, ce que je peux vous dire, le contexte français.... en France il n'y a pas de directive au niveau national. Il y'a des volontés individuelles de la part des universités de mettre l'accent ou moins sur l'assurance qualité, les process assurance qualité, etc et du coup, la culture de la qualité, elle va avec, c'est-à-dire que il y'a des universités où la qualité est développée et il y a des universités où elle est nettement moins développée. On a deux visions qui viennent d'en haut et d'en bas et qui souvent d'ailleurs sont des visions qui s'affrontent, qui se télescopent et qui se font mal. En effet il y'a des tensions, pour en avoir il y en a, il y a bien des tensions depuis dix ans, elles sont plus ou moins exacerbées en fonction des moments politiques que la France traverse

Les universités qui ont un service d'assurance qualité interne, je donne un exemple que je connais bien, la personne qui a été recrutée pour s'occuper de l'assurance qualité, la première chose qu'elle a faite, seule chose qu'elle fait pour l'instant, c'est des questionnaires de satisfaction de services. Oui des questionnaires de satisfaction, des questionnaires où vous notez si vous êtes très content, moyennement content, on est d'accord, ce n'est pas l'assurance qualité, c'est du questionnaire de satisfaction. Sauf que pour l'instant, je l'ai dit l'autre jour dans un conseil d'administration, si j'ai bien compris un tel est responsable de l'assurance qualité, mais pour le moment il nous explique qu'il va envoyer tel questionnaire concernant la satisfaction des étudiants sur la nourriture, des repas servis au self, concernant les horaires de la bibliothèque, concernant que sais-je, vous voyez... Et je leur dis pour moi ce sont des questionnaires de satisfaction pour savoir si le consommateur est content. Mais c'est pas de l'assurance qualité. Et là, le vice-président en charge des formations qui me dit en souriant t'as raison et me dit pour l'instant on fait que ça, parce que on ne sait faire que ça.

Appendix 7. Invitation email to interviewees (English version)

You are kindly invited to participate in the below research project:

Title of the research: The quality panopticon in higher education: a comparative analysis of France and England

The main aim of this research is to analyse the socio--political explanations that are at the root of local conceptions of quality in higher education. It aims to understand the impact of national and institutional policies and discourses in the construction of quality regimes in French and English higher education systems. The study also aims to explore the impacts of such external/internal quality systems on the actual practice of academics in both contexts. The main methods of data collection include desk review and semi--structured interviews with quality agencies' and institutional managers, as well as senior and junior academics in two sample elite universities, i.e., Sciences Po Paris and the LSE. To this end, the following research questions are raised:

1. how is quality in higher education defined and constructed in the cases of England and France?
2. What quality management mechanisms are in place in the two-selected elite higher education institutions in England and France?
3. How do academics perceive and enact quality in their professional practice in these two institutional cases?

Ethical framework: The proposed study will be conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). All interviews will be conducted respecting BERA criteria of 'informed consent', 'confidentiality and anonymity'.

Should you choose to participate in this study, therefore, you may rest assured that you will receive a pseudonym and all information probable to reveal your position and/or department will be removed. Additionally, your participation being on a voluntary basis, you have the possibility to withdraw from the study at any moment and for any reason.

In your role as..... your contribution to this study is of great significance and will be highly appreciated.

Should you kindly volunteer to participate, please respond to this mail and propose 2-3 time slots when you can be available for an interview of 1 hour.

Appendix 8. Invitation email sent to interviewees (French version)

Dans le cadre de la thèse de doctorat de Madame Juliette Torabian

"La qualité panoptique dans l'enseignement supérieur : une analyse comparative de la France et de l'Angleterre"

La qualité de l'enseignement supérieur est devenue un concept "à la mode" dans le monde et surtout en Europe après la conférence de Bologne en 1999 et celle de Bergen en 2005. En dépit des initiatives prises dans ce domaine en Europe, la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur reste un sujet profondément politique et renfermé dans les frontières nationales de chaque pays européen. C'est-à-dire la qualité est perçue et interprétée différemment dans chacun de ces pays et leurs institutions de l'enseignement supérieur. Étant donné que les institutions de l'enseignement supérieur sont 'autonomes' et 'libres', nous pouvons observer un éventail d'approches et de 'cultures' de qualité propres à chacune des institutions.

L'idée centrale de cette recherche est de comprendre et d'analyser les raisons socio-politiques qui sont à l'origine des différentes approches dans les deux contextes français et britanniques. Dans chacun de ces contextes, j'ai sélectionné un exemple de pratique: SciencesPo en France et LSE en Grande Bretagne.

Ce qui m'amène aux problématiques de recherches qui sont les suivantes :

- quels sont les objectifs nationaux et leurs impacts sur les institutions de l'enseignement supérieur (les défis et les tensions) ;
- quelles sont les interprétations de ces institutions de l'enseignement supérieur ? Autrement dit quelle est leur approche qualité (la globalité de la gestion de qualité et de la culture organisationnelle)
- quelle est la perception du corps enseignant de cette approche de la qualité et quelles sont les conséquences dans leur pratique professionnels (défis et tensions).

L'étude proposée sera menée conformément aux directives de la British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). Toutes les interviews seront réalisées en respectant les critères BERA du « consentement éclairé », de la « confidentialité et de l'anonymat ».

Si vous choisissez de participer à cette étude, vous pouvez être assuré que vous recevrez un pseudonyme et toutes les informations susceptibles de révéler votre position et / ou votre département seront supprimées. De plus, votre participation étant volontaire, vous avez la possibilité de vous retirer de l'étude à tout moment et pour n'importe quelle raison.

Dans votre rôle en tant que votre contribution à cette étude est d'une grande importance et sera très appréciée.

Si vous souhaitez volontairement participer, veuillez répondre à cet e-mail et proposer 2 ou 3 plages de temps lorsque vous pouvez être disponible pour une interview d'une heure.