The aim of this paper is to describe the process of reflection on the quality that took place at the time of institution of the Presidium of the University PdQ-UNIVAQ. It was created at the University of L’Aquila on February 2013 (D.R. n. 259), in order to show how a significant experience related to the construction of an internal quality system induces necessarily to consider the relationship between factors and variables at the level of the local system in relation to some aspects and elements in the field of: ICT Centre, functions and actions for Lifelong Learning (third function of the University), and processes for Quality Assurance. The objective is to promoting the development of the University through a connecting internal and external assessment and an interrelation between different institutional responsibilities for the construction of an integrated model of functions.

KEYWORDS: Higher Education, Quality, Lifelong Learning, ICT, Integrated System Functions.

Many thanks to Prof. Paola Inverardi, Rector of the University of L’Aquila for allowing publication.
1. **Quality and European context: role and strengthening of internal evaluation for an integrated system of Quality**

The creation of a European space of higher education cannot be thought without the development of a quality management system, allowing an institution knowing well what it is producing (Harvey, 1999; Harvey, 2002; Harvey, Green, 1993). Indeed, at the core of the reform programme of the European university system, launched by the Bologna Process (1999), and of the new requirements of learning and research, there is:

- Quality Assurance (QA) allowing compatibility, comparability, flexibility of the European Higher Education Systems;
- dialog between stakeholders, or rather the students, academic body, external agencies and organizations and society in general;
- support to processes of teaching-learning based on the student’s characteristics;
- fulfillment of cultural needs of different categories of beneficiary and expansion of University functions (lifelong learning) leading to continuing professional and updating development of range of expertise;
- push to make the Universities technologically advanced (*Smart University*) and able to meet the new needs of research and learning (La Vecchia, Nuzzaci, 2012).

These are dimensions that moved the axis of the university institutions towards the expansion of the democratic base of higher education and educational success of all the students and that made their own way right starting from changes involving the universities throughout Europe. Diversification of educational provision, increase of institutional responsibilities, two-cycle system etc. have influenced the development of initiatives designed to increase structures for assuring quality in various sectors of higher education and to change structures of services and management practices of Universities. The importance of institutional autonomy, attenuated by the acknowledgment of heavy responsibilities, and the need of an internal and external control of quality allowing the institutions to be coherent with purposes they are pursuing and making appropriate the management practices of processes used to achieve precisely identified objectives, have been above all affirmed by the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. Equality concerning education and necessity of a progressive improvement of institutions, as well as the extension of access to higher education by populations even wider of students (included adult workers) have become two sides of the same coin that put quality at the core of the European Higher Education Area, since the second communiqué (Berlin, 19th September 2003), developed by the Ministers of many European Countries interested in the Bologna Process (1999), where it has become central “measure” to create a European cultural space that actually can be attractive, make increase the social cohesion and decrease inequalities, beyond increasing knowledge and transparency. In this sense Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance concern three areas:
The European cooperation between universities, the mobility of students, of graduates, of professors and of staff suitable to provide every person with the opportunity of continuing learning and professional development, of conciliation between formal, informal and non-formal learning, of identification of systems to collect and transfer credits, as well as integration of academic degrees with professional titles, have become therefore crucial factors to push the reform towards the rising of quality, requirement expressed since the first declarations of Bologna, incentive to develop external schemes of quality assurance, certification and accreditation to be developed in a national context also for the pressing request of international visibility and of the necessary acknowledgment of what can be defined “good quality”. In Italy this has created the National Agency for Evaluation of the Research and University System (ANVUR). By defining internal mechanisms of quality, supported by the external control, we expect to safeguard the interests of all the stakeholders, above all the beneficiaries of the educational provision, or rather the students (of every category of “student”), above all in those sectors where a trenchant intervention is highly necessary on the professionalization, reconversion and growth mechanisms in order to support the self-responsibility of each institution also towards its third function, lifelong learning, and contribute in this way to the constitution of a culture “of the” and “for the” quality at any level, which covers at least four important elements (Ehlers, Schneckenberg, 2010):

1. **A structural element** which is representing the quality system of an organisation. This can be e.g. an existing quality management approach for higher education, the tools and mechanisms in place to assure and enhance the quality of the organisation.
2. **The enabling factors** which are representing those factors enabling organisations to incorporate quality regimes into their culture.
3. **The quality culture** element which represents the manifested artefacts, symbols, rituals of an organisation.
4. **Transversal elements** which link different components to each other through participation, trust and communication.

It is the focus attention on the learners (Ehlers 2005), especially those adults (Alberici, 2007; Alberici, Di Rienzo, 2011; Alberici, Serreri, 2009), on the teachers and on the other stakeholders, that have to take effect for successful quality development. The professionalization processes – in terms of capacity of the university of building knowledge, skills and attitudes of stakeholders in the higher education organisation – is thus one important element when building quality cultures in the university institutions. A quality that is expressed through professionalization of teaching and learning processes and improvement of the educational pathways, especially those aimed at meeting the specific needs of the adult population, that implies a set of four competences which are specifically important in processes of educational quality enhancement: quality knowledge, quality experience, quality innovation, quality analysis.
2. ICT, Quality/Lifelong Learning Center

These dimensions relate to the ability which goes beyond the simple use of existing instruments and strategies. It refers to the modification, creation and development of quality strategies and/or instruments for one’s own purpose. An innovative and creative important aspect for these dimensions is: ICT literacy. All of this is actually in line with the attempt of adaptation to the new European directives about education, where there are four objectives that may be enhanced by ICTs:

- expanding access to all levels of education;
- improving the quality of education;
- enhancing lifelong learning;
- facilitating non-formal education.

The processes of quality allow to reflect upon situation and context enabling actors to evaluate different objectives of quality development and negotiate between different perspectives of stakeholders. To “analyse critically” the learning needs of adults and develop appropriated and differentiated cultural proposals, in the light of existing knowledge and experience, it is requires to define a clear strategy for quality.

![Figure 1. Quality Literacy (Ehlers, 2007)](image)

It is enough thinking that the level of education of the adult population is commonly adopted as “proxy” of the level of knowledge and expertise qualified by the labour market (ISFOL [Institute for the Development of Vocational Training for Workers]) and that the last Eurostat survey about the labour forces shows how almost 70% of adults in Europe has at least a upper secondary qualification, showing how a third of the adult population, equal to 76 million of adults in the European Union, does not reach the level ISCED 3 of qualification.

1 For details, URL: (http://www.isfol.it/temi/Formazione_apprendimento/formazione-degli-adulti/portlet_page).
In this sense we need to think about the role developed in Italy by the RUIAP (Italian University Network for Lifelong Learning), which the University of L’Aquila has adhered to, and that is in the way of the programme Europe 2020 fixing at 15% the benchmark referred to the adult population taking part in activities of lifelong learning and that in 2009 sees Italy, in the survey of 2009, within a very diversified context of activities, settled around 6%. However it cannot be said that for Italian Athenaeums it is easy identify specific measures to support the access of adults to Universities and fulfil an educational demand that sees reference targets represented by different categories (who, without diploma or qualification of higher education and training, re-enters in university paths or has not the level ISCED 3, who even if develops management roles does not have an academic qualification, or rather does not have a level lower than ISCED 5 etc.). In order to make concretely realizable training paths for such categories it is important to use technologically advanced systems and structures to supply teaching and e-learning centres (Challis, Holt, Palmer, 2009) able to better meet with different purpose of the university education and of the professionalism learning, but above all of methods of educational design and of “technically and technologically advanced” teaching-learning models. For such a reason, the current approaches, re-oriented towards the identification of specific ways to pursue a contextual improvement in quality, as main responsibility for universities and subjects concerned (students, scholars and administrative staff), guide the process towards a strengthening of culture of internal quality, that is supported by many factors contributing to implement it, such as the development of Athenaeum E-learning Centres or ICT of Athenaeum. These last fulfil also the need of digital expertise that today is a real emergency (mainly in the adult population) that emerges every day all over the world also to meet with the university pedagogical requirements and as direct correspondence with the Centres for teaching and learning (Challis, Holt, Palmer, 2009, pp. 371-383), that can be considered as a whole of infrastructures entailing the sum of educational, researching and service resources, as well as real structure of teaching design addressed to teachers, students and directors. The aim of such structures has been creating “real and virtual places” supporting in a focused way teaching, research and service providing the students, above all the one showing difficulties in realizing their own continuing education, with the best conditions of learning and all the teachers with optimal conditions of teaching at any level (professors, tutors, coordinators etc.), and that can represent apparatus to support the new educational trends. Indeed, the technological infrastructures provide the necessary conditions to create optimal situations for a more accurate educational programming in terms of objectives and planning and for an optimal management of university courses and services, beyond a more substantial inter-institutional and territorial connection. The ICT systems, considered across-the-board, can support a specialized training and an excellent research when they put at the core of their being the “methodological axis” of research and teaching. Supposing that the effective use of ICT first of all depends on behaviours of who operates in such a field, the importance to analyse the models of acceptance of technological and e-learning instruments available for research, teaching and laboratory practices appears as incontrovertible evidence. In particular, e-learning activities that have promoted learning and teaching have become critical components tending to include, even if too often educationally underused, a concept of “off-centre”, inte-
grated and intra- and inter-communicative education between many components of the University, between information flows, between constituents and different structures and services, between professors, staff and students, between training and research, between old and new procedures etc. In such a direction the university of L’Aquila is exploring the application of a methodological approach including an “integrated quality strategy” aiming at describing and exploring a model able to become instrument of change, starting from the lifelong learning as function becoming part of Policies of quality. The Unit of quality, with its activity of evaluation, translates such a function in objectives, actions and concrete practices. Such a problem of course holds two fields: the first is the one of expertise and attributes of education; the second is the one of experience, methods used by the education to organize, supply and develop its main functions (teaching, research and lifelong learning) and means and instruments used to do it (ICT). Here the term quality can be above all ascribed to the whole of operating and technical activities (monitoring and a structured policy internally planned and realized) elaborated and used to meet with the quality requisites. Supported by the terms “management” and “assurance”, referring to an aggregate of actions and measures, regularly assumed to assure the quality of products, services and processes of higher education, with particular attention to the prescribed threshold of met quality, it is used either to specify the monitoring of the path or to eliminate the causes generating an unsatisfactory functioning in the system (Flynn, Schroeder, Sakakibara, 1994; Van der Wiele, Brown, 1999). Sometimes a minimum quality control (mainly as certification) is used as mechanism of filtering in confirming that a university institution is fulfilling or is in minimum compliance with the quality requisites and with appropriate on-going control procedures. If therefore, since the beginning of the movement and research about quality, very different concepts have survived one near another and the other one have been progressively improved trying to accept meanings even more thorough, more or less compatible with the definition given by ISO, today the quality includes and is synonym of many qualities, of work, of service, of information, of process, of product, of subjects, of system, of institution, of objective etc. and of other of its performances, having in common some elements that keep being underlying the interpretative models.

In case of the trinomial considered Learning/ICT/Evaluation, it needs:

- systematic procedures and efficient devices for assuring quality;
- to resort to procedures and forms of evaluation for its improvement at different level;
- to use multiple measures;
- to use multi-stage procedures of evaluation (with internal and external evaluation, follow-up and issue of reports) such as main instruments of quality for assessing teaching and learning;
- to elaborate efficient instruments;
- to explain with precision the absolute results and the educational added value;
- to adopt mixed measures suitable to address any result desired by the stakeholders (different categories of student, included adults, professors of various sectors etc.) and to record characteristics of the institution, with a mix of measures ranging from quality to quantity indicators of performance;
- to elaborate reporting of contextual data considering the specificity of the relevant context.
From here comes the idea that the reliability of measurements, however, shall never be apart from the social function written in the university bylaws and its general and lifelong characteristics of education and research plans. Indeed the quality cannot be defined in an absolute sense, but still keeps on “concerning” the functionality of the purposes pursued and the purposes of the education it refers to. And it is for such a reason that we give to it lots of meanings, approaches, perspectives, dimensions, levels, objects, forms that transmit ideas and different interpretative models also coming from far disciplinary fields, such as well-structured points of view interrelated to the categories of subjects concerned (students, teachers etc.), that turn its concept according to the power distributed in the system. In its specific concept, in the triangulation Lifelong Learning/ICT/Evaluation, it expresses in investing:

1. in designing and planning an integrated system of functions;
2. in a strong function of the self-evaluation and self-assessment as instruments to improve activities and programmes chosen;
3. in a controlled and synergic action of strategic functions of the University concerning Mission and Policies of quality;
4. in a diversification of modalities of supply of teaching provision in order to suitably meet with the needs expressed by various categories of student;
5. in a solicitation of processes of internal empowerment in order to make the stakeholders more aware of the purposes pursuing by the institution.

The translation of Policies of quality of Athenaeum in “strategy of integrated quality” uses three key elements: criteria, indicators and levels of performance.

The indicators specify what the institution is expected to do at every level of performance for each criterion. The chosen indicator describes with precision what the institution is required to do in terms of performance at any level and how their work can be told apart the work of other elements for each criterion. In the same way, the indicators help the institution to precisely and constantly assess the work of the stakeholders.
3. The University of L’Aquila as Smart University

The university, as integral part and expression of the cultural fabric of a land, a city, a community etc., is, indeed, the first space driving an intelligent learning and for a lifelong development of the population at local level. Because of this need it is by now of common use, after the growing importance of concepts of lifelong learning for the economic, social and environmental future of people and places (Longworth, Osborne, 2010; Longworth, 2003). In response to these changes and introduction of the internal system of quality, today the University of L’Aquila has to redesign its action in view of the new identified needs, or rather of its objectives, methods of action, theoretical models it refers to, the evaluation of performances and partnerships it is able to activate at local, national and international level, which are inserted in networks of expertise and interventions aiming at meeting the emerging social and cultural necessities (Cheng, Tam, 1997). Within such a consideration there is the founding plan of the Athenaeum Presidio of Quality of L’Aquila, called UNIVAQ-PdQ1 and established by the D.R. nr. 259 of the 13.02.2013, composing the concrete translation of Policies of Quality of the Athenaeum (www.univaq.it), placed at the summit of a pyramid starting from which are organized all the elements of quality of the system, not least the documentary and documental one, that do not exclude some key factors such as the one we are considering here, or rather: ICT, Lifelong Learning and Evaluation.

The University, as organization defined a whole of structures and rules making formally possible the coordination of a whole of (human, financial and material) means in view of the production of a good or service, represents a social and cultural construction, that is part of a precise history and contemplates objectives and structures of organization of management and production methods of culture (Saraf, Benson Schroeder, 1989). If it is true that some actions and principles of quality, such as planning, making, measuring, improving, are essential to affirm it, it is as much true that every plan of increase of quality shall be adapted to the context of education or of service it refers to and it cannot be thought otherwise than a close relationship with all the other dimensions. Keeping in mind what said above, the Guidelines of orientation of the policies of quality of the University of L’Aquila, in this perspective, have tried to solve priority problems previ-

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1 The Athenaeum Unit of Quality was established by D.R. nr. 259 del 13.02.2013 with the task to coordinate, manage, promote and monitor all the activities developed for the quality of teaching and educational activities by implementing in every degree programme a practical and fast system of quality evaluation. It:
- defines and proposes the system of quality assurance and self-evaluation/evaluation of the degree programmes of Athenaeum (bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, research doctorate, masters, etc.);
- monitors the application of the system in every degree programme;
- monitors the results of the educational processes and make them available for the purpose of quality assurance and internal self-evaluation/evaluation.
- promotes the culture of quality.

The Unit is composed of 13 members: the Dean or his delegate, 7 professors as representatives of departments of the Athenaeum, a representative of the students in the Evaluation Committee and a representative of the academic Senate, three units of technical-administrative staff.
ously known or well identified in diagnostic phase. They considered the importance of keeping in mind the way of meeting with the beneficiaries of the institution functions, that, for the University are composed of different categories of student, including adults, justifying the actions undertaken in view of achieving some concrete planned objectives (particularly strong cultural profile, professionalism that can be used and ranges of expertise even more update). Such a commitment, concerning the measure and the improvement of quality, was defined in specific and understandable terms for everyone, as transmitted by questions that can be connected to three macro-variables:

– which are the values and the principles of action which the university institution is inspired to in order to lead its mission?
– what missions and what services does the institution concretely promote?
– in which way and how such services are realized?

The University of L’Aquila, starting from precise legal decrees and requisites, aims at enhancing a “culture of system of quality assurance” able to pave the way for a renewed institutional autonomy and enhancing in all its own activity of training in the direction specified by Europe (ENQA, 2005), being engaged in evaluation of an equal distribution of resources and opportunities that will affect the opportunities of life of the students and the general wellness of whom somehow are (and will be) part of the population of students which it turns to, included the “hidden” one of the adults. In such a sense the Unit paid attention to these factors in the process of adaptation to the evaluation and to the certification according to the international standards, which rules and addresses remark mainly the principle of responsibility explicitly recalled to realize internal systems of quality in public and private Universities. In the initial path of exploration, the Unit, in order to better fulfil its function, considered appropriate:

– being equipped with a model;
– defining the evaluation design;
– explaining the expectations and establishing a strategy;
– developing an appropriate methodology;
– planning development stages of management of processes;
– establishing a plan of communication (Nuzzaci, 2012).

All of this has been produced within the Unit of L’Aquila since the beginning of its foundation, it started from a procedure of processing a design and a model of quality being part of and limited by policies of quality (which synthesis can be found in the website www.univaq.it) precisely defined and by devices clearly expressed (the University immediately equipped the Unit of Quality with a Regulation). This because the lines of address of the University can exclude identities and values shared by certain academic community and relationship between:

– Identities and values (what it is believed);
– Offer of service/s (what we are going to do);
– Organization (means and resources to do it).

University institutions, for their nature, lead to the field of social and cultural action a founding intention, an initial commitment that gives to the design sense
and value, which history is part of the movements of policy of reform composing an important cultural factor allowing, evoking this history, to trace a process of appropriation about the founding intention and the system of values that are at the origin of its founding design. The provision of a service can be considered the reason for being of an institution. Therefore, the design shall be defined in order to meet the needs of various beneficiaries and shall refuse social and cultural policies of the sector. The Athenaeum of L’Aquila started from this consideration, when it was on the point “of reading” its educational provision, including 66 (Bachelor’s and Master’s) Degrees, 7 Departments and 2 Centres of excellence for research, expressing a diversified educational provision, with the main objective of maintenance of high teaching and researching standards, without excluding the capacity of moving with the times through a progressive adaptation to new requirements of knowledge and labour world.

But who are these beneficiaries that the university institution of L’Aquila is turning to?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University of L’Aquila</th>
<th>Enrolled Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Updated at 1.00 pm of the 21/10/2013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dep. of Engineering and Information Sciences and Mathematics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrial and Information Engineering and Economics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinical medicine, public health, life and environmental sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biotechnological and Applied Clinical Sciences</td>
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<td>Chemical and Physical Sciences</td>
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<td>MEDICINE AND SURGERY</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATHEMATICAL, PHYSICAL AND NATURAL SCIENCES</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>6513</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Enrolments Department

2 The Departments promote, coordinate and organize research activities for one or more sectors or scientific-disciplinary areas sharing the same objectives or research methodologies and promote, organize and carry out academic teaching within our University.
Data above written refer to all the type of Courses of study: Degree programmes, doctorates, masters and schools of specialization. The population of adults is 12.41% of the attending population. The first problem concerns this “hidden population” attending the university of the lifelong learning and the role it plays within the problems of a “quality teaching provision” and the importance to be able to take charge of its existence implementing an efficient system of teaching action using the ICT/e-learning centre, able to connect with some essential principles leading the control strategies of internal quality at level of:

- responsibility of the University to be equipped with a model of internal assurance quality in line with the strategy of integrated processes and that promotes an internal culture of quality;
- difference and innovation of organizational and teaching structures aiming at efficiency and diversification of systems of educational provision appealing to ICT and e-learning systems and to the enhancement of communication and information system;
- transparency of procedures, interventions and synergies of action between teaching and research;
- respect of general, cultural, social and individual interests of every stakeholder;

Table 2. Enrolments Department a.y. 2012-2013

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Departments</th>
<th>Age &lt; 38 M</th>
<th>Age &lt; 38 F</th>
<th>Age &gt; 38 M</th>
<th>Age &gt; 38 F</th>
<th>Tot. M/F M</th>
<th>Tot. F</th>
<th>Tot.</th>
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<td>95</td>
<td>472</td>
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<td>1101</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>1207</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>1478</td>
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<td>Industrial and Information Engineering and Economics</td>
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<td>3019</td>
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<td>Physical and Chemical Sciences</td>
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<td><strong>1252</strong></td>
<td><strong>1704</strong></td>
<td><strong>8501</strong></td>
<td><strong>11491</strong></td>
<td><strong>9753</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine and Surgery</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>73</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1265</strong></td>
<td><strong>1719</strong></td>
<td><strong>8523</strong></td>
<td><strong>11610</strong></td>
<td><strong>9788</strong></td>
<td><strong>13329</strong></td>
<td><strong>23997</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
– respect for all the beneficiaries of education (including adult population and workers);
– rules and guidelines aiming at developing a culture of quality leading to acknowledge the necessity of its progressive improvement.

Such a specification has to be made because it is the offer of the University to characterize the positioning of the institution in certain field, community, territory and therefore training and professionalism, with respect to matters we are treating in this contribution. Given that the offer of the institution shall be also designed with priority starting from beneficiary’s explicit and implicit requirements, concretely, we had to specify characteristics of the population to welcome, then fixing the ways of consultation with various stakeholders allowing to identify and monitor such requirements. Such a process can be understood as “accompanying path” that is for the Athenaeum the response to the requirements previously identified through solutions such as the enhancement of Service e-learning@AQ, the online teaching for the students of the university of L’Aquila (http://didattica.univaq.it/moodle/).

3.1 Methodology

In such a direction, the idea of the Unit of Quality has been considered mainly as process putting into play values, internal/external dimensions and efficacy rather than simple outgoing inputs; in such an interpretative key two concepts have become predominant:

– **quality as transformation** (changing process of people);
– **quality as improvement** (changing process of institutions); or rather it is considered a “strategic change” based on researching a lifelong progress and a primary responsibility of the institution for the purpose to maximize the use of institutional autonomy and freedom, mainly happening through the enhancement of measures of structured progress for enhancing the quality of an institution, a programme, a course of study etc. (Nuzzaci, 2011).

This because if it is true that the expression “culture of quality” is needed to describe shared values and common responsibilities of all the members of institutions and bottom-up approaches developed by the academic community that can be attributed to specific attitudes and behaviours built within the institution (EUA, 2003b), first of all it should be then explained how to create it between internal and external evaluation starting from the respect of its essential principles such as reliability of measurements and their “validity”, but above all respecting beneficiary’s needs and characteristics of the teaching provision of certain Athenaeum. In the perspective of EUA, the culture of quality in the Athenaeum of L’Aquila appeals to an internal organizational culture with lifelong mechanisms of optimization at two different levels:

– **Institutional**, a structural and administrative element for the purpose to improve the quality, referring it to the improvement of processes, but also to the coordination between different levels;
– **Individual/personal**, cultural and psychological degree of shared values, certainties, expectations and commitment of individuals towards a culture of quality.
In prospect, therefore, the idea of an integrated model between technological Centre, lifelong Learning and quality Centre cannot be perceived but as enhancement of the culture of quality when it pushes the Athenaeum to implement a change in the organizational and cultural system, that:

- involves the measurement of distance between intentions (purposes) and what is realized;
- consists in a path of creation of confidence between parties concerned (stakeholder) needed to keep the quality over the time in respect to inputs, processes and results;
- tries to meet with expectations or measures up to the threshold of minimum requisites, or rather includes a co-production providing for an interaction between a plurality of legitimate stakeholders;
- embodies the essential characteristics of a subject, a community, an object, an action, a process or an organization;
- refers to status, high degree or not, or rather it is perfectible like in a quality performance;
- represents a way to implement structured and effective processes of evaluation.
- The future direction will be examine specific references of quality keeping in mind:
  - what produced in terms of previous practices of the Athenaeum;
  - consultation with parties concerned;
  - methodological approach previously used.

The beginning exploration is focused on an initial description and specificities of the quality design that first of all, in the idea of building an integrated system, within the context of a plan of improvement, cannot count but on an enhancement of diagnostic evaluation carried out by the staff of the Unit together with other components (such as Athenaeum Committees and other bodies and components of the University). The Unit, with its work of preliminary exploration, is assessing the relevance and non-relevance of indicators to be adopted in the first phase. Such actions will concern the chance to build an interpretative framework of reference within which the integrated system operates and where are defined specific dynamics of quality about the future educational provision. Such an aspect will also allow examining some variables of context that will help to better define priority actions, to evaluate potential progresses in terms of:

- diagnostic evaluation of the provision;
- single plan;
- evaluation concrete procedures.

It means:

- considering the self-evaluation of an essential component (Karlsen, Stensaker, 1995; Saarinen, 1995; Rasmussen, 1995; Bazargan, 1999) that promotes to examine one’s objectives, tasks, practices and results applying different approaches, revealing weak points of the activity and implementing interventions to strengthen them, there are still open questions about the correct frequency, depth and relevance of one’s model of self-evaluation, of which
it should be proved the efficacy; this implies indisputably the capacity of the institution to observe, analyse and judge its performances on the base of specific criteria and establish how to improve them, but referring to the independent validation (as provided by the current legislation in force);

– developing a strong information system, but also a planning integrated system of ICT in teaching, above all when it is turned to students with special needs, working students, such as, the importance (complies with the reason why and what it means) for a teacher in service to study to get an educational Master. This highlights the importance of flexibility, of using e-learning programmes, open learning not only about the chance for the teacher to optimize its time, combining study with work and family, but also the one to be able to make effective the integration between work and study activity to get the most advantage and benefit from the appropriate structuring of experience and its re-use, eliminating some barriers that can limit its access to traditional courses. Therefore, not “makeshift” but chance to combine a wide range of teaching strategies, particularly those making use of independent and individual learning. The consideration about the relation ICT-Quality is given on a teaching and research level when it helps to “bring the barriers down”, create teaching and research systems more flexible, opener and more “smart” as well as reproducible.

– providing all the students with wide opportunities of learning and qualification;

– providing also adults with a “second chance of academic qualification” or a professional one through advanced technological instruments and support programmes for every category, but it entails an extensive use of new technologies for defining a neuralgic structure within the University that can become advanced when it fulfils multiple purposes of education and that allows every student improving their knowledge and expertise. However, in order to make this happen, the structure needs to have: an efficient management system (operating figures, kept of registrations, traceability for e-learning systems, budget, resources and services management, as well as evaluation and monitoring etc.), a valid planning model, a suitable apparatus to help the student, a planning structure for every category of beneficiary, above all adults, of focusing and of structure.

– In defining the model of quality of the University of L’Aquila and its potential connections with internal structures/services, it cannot be excluded:

– a Unit of Quality able to promote self-evaluation processes to be put in symmetric relation with the external evaluation system (ANVUR), though remain questions about the appropriate frequency and depth of self-assessment and the relevance of different models of self-assessment;

– a technological and e-learning centre (implementation of the existing one);

– a structure/service for lifelong learning (present in policies of quality).

These three elements are linked by a red string inserting quality in a weave of relations and virtuous interconnections.
4. The perspectives of an internal evaluation and improvement processes of quality of the Athenaeum of L’Aquila: from technologies to lifelong learning in synergies between structures

If it is true that using technological systems and devices has changed the way how persons interact with the university environment and the way of living it enhancing the relation university environment-learning, helping to integrate different contexts of learning and bringing visible improvements, such as, in managing the educational time with evident effect on the quality of people’s education and life. At the same time using technology, in teaching and conditions and ways of provision of teaching, gives advanced chances of connection between education and diversified populations of students, teachers, staff, contributing to increase and enhance the efficacy of teaching and a probable higher effect of the university on the territory. But, at the same time, a pervading and effective use of ICT in a university context entails the choice of specific educational strategies to make actually appropriate the performances respect the general “pedagogical” design that sees the technology integrated in processes and systems of quality turned to “make teaching and research” substantially able to increase academic performances at any level. This because the stakes are a sustainable and intelligent university requiring important changes that are strictly connected to communication, resources management, taking charge of the transition able to establish the ways how the students will learn specialized competence and knowledge in every field (social, mathematical, scientific studies etc.) and the development of specific and diversified professional habitus, which change over the time is established by the strength of cultural profiles and relevant range. The quality of a university institution becomes integrated system of functions when: it is put to use in such individual and social needs, but above all when put at the core of its action the educational innovation and programming and the relation between evaluation, initial and continuing education/research and ICT; it is interested in organizational ways of research of quality improvement allowing its structure to know even better how it works, the reality of implemented ways of control, of quality of performances expressed and its capacity to perform corrective measures. The three subsystems considered, evaluation and self-evaluation processes, initial and continuing learning and technological innovation, essentially concern the capacity of the university institution to express a service appreciated for its quality that meet the needs of every category of beneficiary and a performance of modalities of professionalization going along with the subject while working and in the adaptation according to emerging professional needs. First of all, this has to do with modalities according to which the three subsystems operate in coherence with policies of quality and Orientations and with the complex cultural design of Athenaeum; second of all, with the chance to establish central matters in order to check the relevance of its ways of functioning.
Conclusions

Just to give you an example, the University of L’Aquila has recently started a process of administrative simplification through the transition from paper to electronic documents, to which the current legislation recognizes full legal value. This process assumes a key role in the improvement of the services to students. It may be considered one of the most important initial actions towards the establishment of a more effective relationship among universities, students and territory. Many of these activities are ongoing and make us hoping the best for the future. The basic assumption is to look at the realization of an advanced system of policies, strategies and practices for quality to establish a role model for designing future policies and cultural local systems. A role model that looks at the initial and continuing learning and the research with a watchful eye and in a systemic perspective to turn the Athenaeum into a “Smart University”.

Figure 4. Quality and ICT

![Quality Diagram](image)

Figure 5. Integrated System Functions

![System Functions Diagram](image)
References


