Gap analysis

A gap analysis is an examination of the differences between existing and desired HEI governance. Figure 1 shows the course of execution of a gap analysis. At the beginning the existing (as-is) state and the desired (to-be) state should be determined.

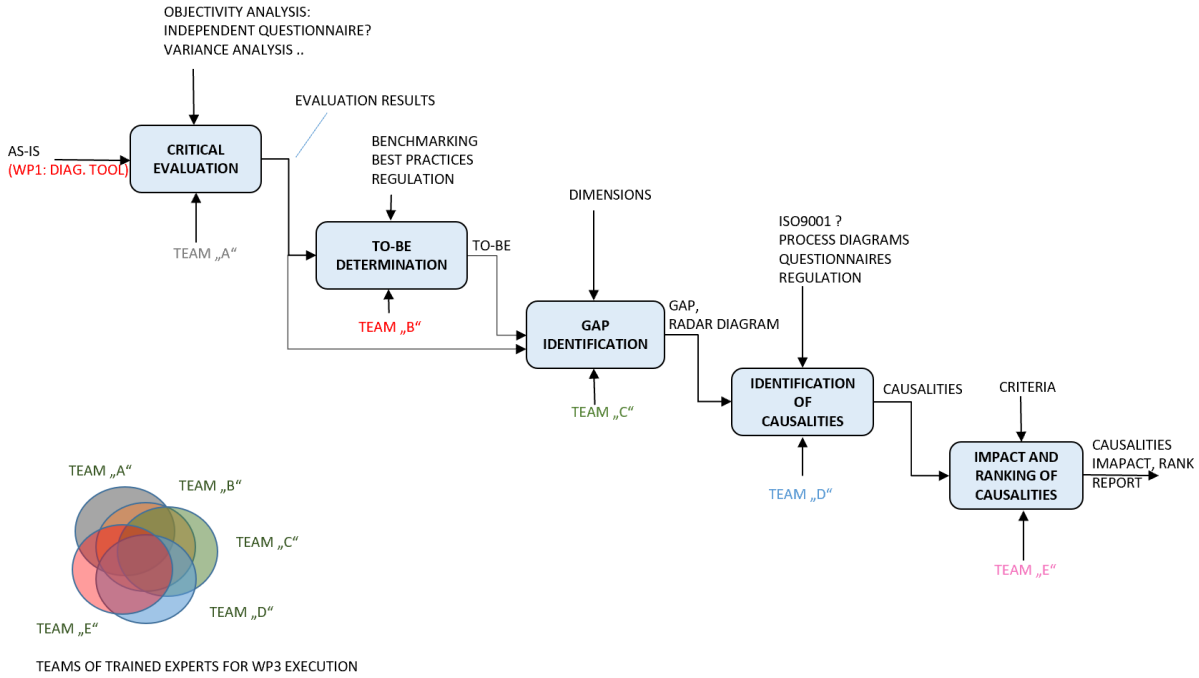

Figure 1: Gap analysis process

As-Is

The existing HEI governance is evaluated through the diagnostic tool developed in WP1. The diagnostic tool includes strategic activities of each HEI (TEACHING, RESEARCH and THIRD MISSION) and different dimensions (AUTONOMY, ACCOUNTABILITY, MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES and PARTICIPATION) and subdimensions characterising the issue of governance. There are various groups and individuals, i.e. stakeholders, that can affect or are affected by governance and other activities of a university. Within WP1 groups of relevant university stakeholders were identified to be included in the diagnostic tool. The diagnostic tool enables investigation of the issue of governance and identification of the preliminary training needs at the level of dimensions and subdimensions. It is important that the diagnostic tool is as objective as possible.

To-be

The “to-be” state can be derived employing benchmarking, best practices, regulations, recognized opportunities and/or other sources of inspiration to form a vision of the HEI in the future.

Benchmarking can address three areas of activities: Process benchmarking is all about better understanding of processes, comparing performance against internal and external benchmarks, and finding ways to optimise and improve your processes. The idea is that, by understanding how top HEI complete a process, some HEI find ways to make own processes more efficient, faster and more effective. Strategic benchmarking compares strategies, business approaches and business models in order to strengthen own strategic planning and determine own strategic priorities. Performance benchmarking involves collecting information on how well HEI is doing in terms of outcomes and comparing these outcomes internally or externally. As benchmarking address different areas of activities, one key goal is always in mind: to identify gaps in performance and uncover opportunities to improve, whether that means making processes more efficient, reducing costs, increasing profits, boosting customer satisfaction, or whatever. For benchmarking a HEI can choose either to compare to other in the country or region or choose a specific HEI system as described in introduction of this document. The results of the diagnostic tool also expose underperforming areas of governance where changes are needed and indicate the desired end state.

When considering the best practices, we should have in mind that they cannot be transferred from one cultural or organisational context to another, without an analysis of how they are perceived in the HEI that intend to take them over.

Gap identification

Based on the "as-is" and "to-be" states gap(s) can be identified. The next step is to analyse them. The aim is to find causalities that are the cause of the gap and possible approaches/activities to close the gap. Also, it is often reasonable to evaluate the importance of all the identified gaps and focus on allocating majority of the resources to areas of the highest priority.

Identification of causalities can employ Root Cause Analysis (RCA) to almost any situation. It aims performance improvement measures at root causes which are more effective than treating the symptoms or factors that may contribute to a problem. To be effective, RCA must be performed systematically with conclusions that are backed by documented evidence. There is usually more than one potential root cause for any given problem. To be effective, the analysis must establish all known causal relationships between the root cause(s) and the defined problem. If the root causes are not straightforward, it is important to assure that the right expertise, knowledge and staff is included. Impact and a ranking of causalities should be carried out according to particular HEI criteria and importance.

An action plan that can be implemented, monitored, and continuously improved over time should be created to eliminate the disparities discovered in root cause analysis. If the actions required to close the gaps are simple, the gap analysis document can also be used to track them to completion. If the steps are more complex, the information can be used to manage a project to close them or be divided among responsible parties or teams.

Gap analysis for your HEI

Before starting this analysis, think of how you want your university to improve in the future. Based on this vision, put down most important goals that describe your vision. They can be short terms or long terms, here it is important that they represent focal points for guiding the direction of change. When you want a goal to be achieved should reflect your opinion on how much time is needed for you to achieve it. Accountability

Put down your most important goals on a piece of paper or a blackboard (you can use the SMART notation) and start analysing/discussing how your current governance practices are related to the goals you chose.

The goals represent the ideal future state. If everything worked according to plan, where would you be? Describe your university and the governance of university when your goals are achieved. Formulate the descriptions using dimensions and subdimensions that are familiar to you from the diagnostic tool – they can represent the goals directly or indirectly. Fill the statements into the "Desired state" table.

Next, describe the current state of you HEI. Express the state in relation to the desired state. For example, if you want to achieve certain goal in the future, what is your starting point in this moment? Also, include in the current state any additional areas with deficiencies that were recognized through the diagnostic tool. Fill all statements into the "Current state" table.

By comparing the desired and current state identify the gaps. Fill the descriptions in the "identification of gaps" table.

Desired state

Having in mind the goals describe the future state of governance of your university from the perspectives of the four dimensions.

Autonomy
Management
Accountability
Participation

Current state

Review the state of governance and/or results of governance activities of your university and determine what is missing, what falls short of potential.

Autonomy
Management
Accountability
Participation

Identification of gaps

With the desired and current state clearly stated, identify the gaps between the as-is and to-be states.

Autonomy
Management
Accountability
Participation

Development of the action plan

After completion of the gap analysis, the gap value, identified causes and their ranking should be known and well understood. With such insights, HEI can start developing a long-term action plans and roadmaps that are sustainable over time yet flexible enough to adapt to internal and external challenges and trends. Consensus of all stakeholders is crucial for the motivation and success of activities.

In the following, try to identify and analyse the causes of the gaps. Find various possible paths (e.g. appropriate sequence of actions) to achieve the closing of the gaps. Select the most appropriate action plan (in your opinion) for each of the gaps and put the activities into the "Action plan" table.

Define the action with name and description in the "Action" column and which gap it addresses ("Gap" column). Specify who is responsible for the realisation ("Who is responsible"), when will the action be in progress ("Timeline") and when the plan is expected to be completed. For successful completion of any plan enough resources must be available to make a change happen. For every action plan, consider all the resource needed to execute it ("Resources"). To monitor the progress of the action plans, define the measures that will be able to express the state of progress of the activities ("Progress measure").

Gap	Action	Who is responsible	Timeline (from – to dates)	Due date	Resources (budget, people …)	Progress measure