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**Abstract**

The increasing dominance of educational markets means that quality of higher education has the character of open signifiers of periodic occurrence, embedded institutionally as ways of consensual communication on how to go on as smoothly as possible. This promotes the growth of context dependent and local interpretations of how to meet in agreement regarding quality in everyday practices. All interpretations are contextualised and as a result are nullified outside the context in which they occur. Discourses on quality promote flexibility and create periodic legitimacy through discursive nullification processes. On the other hand, institutions have to adopt standards in education as a measure of outcome indicators for benchmarking. When quality is replaced by standards and if standards are equivalent to labour market relevance this might signal the beginning of overall external control over higher education. In the long run it will hardly benefit educational programmes if institutions of higher educations fail to 'stand for' quality that, in the very least, can supplement the fulfilment of politically determined targets and standards. In this way the market will have not only

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graduates who are going into employment but also engaged citizens who can transform and challenge the market. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)