

Recent Trends in Quality Assurance The Agencies' perspective

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Disclaimer:

I'm not a researcher. This is not a scientific presentation.

(I'm going to be brief, I'm going to simplify inappropriately; I'm going to be unfair.)



There is no recent trend in Quality Assurance.



If at all:



**If at all:
The number of birds is growing.**



To be remembered
The last 10 years
Where we stand now
Challenges and expectations
The birds



To be remembered:

Framework conditions for emergence of QA

- Obvious quality problems due to massification of higher education
- Financial constraints
- Deregulation and accountability

Quality Assurance as

- **an attempt to resolve quality problems**
and as
- **a steering instrument for higher education systems**



To be remembered:

As a consequence quality assurance traditionally has been serving two purposes:

- **Enhancement of quality:** mainly intrinsic motivation. Emphasise on the responsibility of the institutions/ internal quality assurance.
- **Accountability:** demonstrating/documenting quality to students, public authorities and society at large.

Today also the function as a **transparency tool** gains importance



The last 10 years:

Methodology, Methodology, Methodology



Where do we stand? Recent surveys:

Variety and steady change are key features of external QA in the EHEA

„The most common external quality assurance procedures are accreditation and evaluation of programmes, followed at a significant distance by evaluation and accreditation of institutions and by audits.“

90% of agencies apply more than one approach

75% of agencies changed or change their approach

Trend towards quality audits. (QPP II, 2009)



Where do we stand? Radical shifts:

Variety and steady change are key features of external QA in the EHEA

Recent (radical) shifts:

Sweden: Move from (rather) enhancement oriented quality assurance to student testing

England: Risk based quality assurance approach about to be introduced

(similar discussion in Hong Kong)

Australia: Move from enhancement oriented quality assurance to risk based regulation



Where do we stand? Recent surveys:

Variety and steady change are key features of external QA in the EHEA

„The emergence of a unified European quality assurance system is unlikely“ due to diverse national agendas.

Purpose and design of external quality assurance procedures are highly dependent on national context, irrespective of ESG. This is a typical feature of the Bologna process as a process of open coordination.

Purpose and design of external quality assurance get more and more de-coupled.



The coming 10 years?

~~Methodology, Methodology, Methodology~~

Purpose! Purpose! Purpose!



Purposes of QA Agencies (David Woodhouse 2010)

1. Assist the higher education institution (HEI) to set up and develop its internal QMS (institutional development or capacity building).
2. Assist the HEI to improve its quality (quality improvement).
3. Evaluate the HEI's systems for achieving their objectives (ie purposes) or standards, and the effectiveness of these systems (audit).
4. Measure the quality and/or standards of the HEI according to some (internal or external) yardstick (assessment).
5. Provide an explicit comparison between one or more institutions, either within the same country or internationally (benchmarking).
6. Provide a ranking of the HEIs according to some criteria relating to performance (ranking).
7. Determine whether the HEI can be permitted to offer specified programs, or qualify for some other benefit (a gatekeeper role, usually termed accreditation).
8. Exclude potential overseas education from coming into the country (gatekeeper)
9. Close down low quality, low standard institutions (often employed in an early phase of proliferation of small private institutions) (policeman)
10. Define and certify qualifications (qualifications authority)
11. Establish and maintain a framework of qualifications (framework)
12. Assess and record learning, including experiential learning, to enable credit accumulation and transfer (credit accumulation and transfer).
13. Steer the HEI in particular directions, in terms of planning, scope or methods (steering or transformation; relates to fitness **of** purpose)
14. Provide a report on the HEI as a basis for (government) funding (funding).
15. Provide a report on the HEI to show how it has used the funds and other resources it has enjoyed (accountability).
16. Monitor the financial viability of the HEI (viability).
17. Check the HEI's compliance with legal and other requirements (compliance).
18. Provide independent information about the HEI for various constituencies (prospective students, employers, etc.) (information provision).
19. Report on the quality and standing of the HE sector as a whole (sector report).
20. Collate the results and outcomes of the activities of other EQAs (co-ordination)

Could we expect trends in quality assurance to emerge?



Challenges from within higher education: Competition and Diversification

Competition and Diversification as major driving forces in higher education.

Quality in higher education as core success factor for HEI.

Trend from quality assurance towards quality oriented higher education management?

Quality is a relative concept. This calls either for generic process designs or for diversification of the quality assurance processes.



Challenges from within higher education: Learning outcomes

The student centered learning approach has necessarily a significant impact on quality assurance.

Trend towards focus on students' learning experience in quality assurance procedures?

What does the actual achievement of intended learning outcomes tell about the quality of an institution or a programme?



Challenges from outside higher education: Politics and Transparency tools

Quality Assurance as tool for policy evaluation?

Are items like internationalisation, gender equity, equal access at the heart of quality in teaching and learning?



Challenges from outside higher education: Politics and Transparency tools

Quality Assurance as transparency tool?

Growing interest in accessing detailed and reliable information on the quality of individual study programmes, faculties and higher education institutions.

Request for information serve comparison purposes, rather than description of single programmes or institutions.

Alternative tools: Reporting systems, Rankings and AHELO.



Recent trend in quality assurance:

We try to kill too many birds with one stone!



Recent trend in quality assurance:

We try to kill too many birds with one stone!

And the number of birds is growing.



Recent trend in quality assurance:

We see a professionalisation of quality assurance and a de-coupling of discourses within this community and discourses in the political arena.





Thank you for your attention!

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